

OATHS AND GREED IN TACITUS' *HISTORIES*

BY

NICHOLAS MICHAEL DEE

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Classical Philology
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2017

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Antony Augoustakis, Chair
Associate Professor Eleni Manolaraki, University of South Florida
Associate Professor Angeliki Tzanetou
Assistant Professor Brian Walters
Professor Craig Williams

Abstract

In Tacitus' treatment of the various military conflicts of 69-70 CE, the military oath of allegiance (*sacramentum*) assumes tremendous significance throughout. The historian pointedly begins his narrative with Galba's failure to properly compensate his soldiers for their loyalty. This expectation of financial reward for swearing allegiance, a phenomenon which I call the "*sacramentum-donativum* contract", arose earlier in the Julio-Claudian period and is still, in Tacitus' view, the bedrock of the soldier-emperor relationship in 69. Vespasian and his close supporter Mucianus appreciate this contract and understand the vital role the *sacramentum* ought to play, as the rise of the Flavian challenge in the east demonstrates. Yet, notably, it is instead the brutal and greedy campaign of Antonius Primus that allows for Flavian rule. In *Histories* 4, after the civil wars have officially ended, Julius Civilis and his fellow rebel Batavians prove adept at administering oaths in order to garner support and subvert loyalties, thereby forcing Roman (and reader) to reckon with the source of Flavian power. The extant text ends with no guarantees that the new regime will ever strike the correct balance between a soldier's greed and an emperor's demand for loyalty. In fact, there is every indication that no full reconciliation is on the horizon.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: <i>sacramentum</i> : Definition, Evolution, and Rupture.....	7
Chapter 2: The Success of the Flavian <i>sacramenta</i>	60
Chapter 3: The Calculations of Civil War.....	93
Chapter 4: The Chaotic Oaths of a <i>bellum permixtum</i> : <i>Histories</i> 4 and the Batavian Revolt...	146
Final Conclusions	197
Bibliography	201

Introduction

Usually in Latin literature, the fact that fealty is or has been pledged lurks somewhere in the assumed cultural context. If an oath is mentioned, its inclusion is usually incidental, part of the textual scenery. This makes perfect sense: oaths were a fact of life in the Roman world. So there is really no particular reason to dwell on them.¹ Tacitus chooses to dwell. By doing so, he transforms an element of interpersonal interaction, usually relegated to the background of historiographical narratives, into a prominent motif, imbued with meaning beyond the merely documentary.² Those who have discussed the oaths in Tacitus' works in past scholarship have been almost exclusively concerned with their evidentiary value in the reconstruction of Roman institutional history.³ While not without merit, this approach does not do justice to Tacitus' literary craft. As we shall see, the diverse and subtle ways in which the various strata of military society in the *Histories* employ, respond to, embrace, and resist oaths all shed much-needed light on the civil war landscape of 69-70 CE.⁴

¹ You might say that to do so would, in some instances, be like sports broadcasters offering commentary during the singing of the national anthem.

² I do not mean to suggest that Tacitus alone is capable of treating oaths in this way. Studies on other historians' uses of oaths are without doubt also needed.

³ Scholarly interest in parsing and codifying the precise functions of oaths, their administrators, their recipients, and how all three changed over time, dates back at least as far as Mommsen (1871) 792-93. The following is a (certainly incomplete) list of attempts to elucidate several aspects of the historical oath, some of which have proved more influential than others in the present study, including a brief description of their argument or contribution: Premerstein (1914) 36-74 saw a relationship between oaths and imperial *clientela*. Brunt (1962) 77 emphasizes the apparent weakness of oaths to ensure loyalty in the late Republic. Millar (1963), esp. 238, questions the continuity in form between the Tiberian accession oaths and what preceded them. Beare (1979) address whether pre-Christian emperors received imperial oaths to their *Genius*. Herrmann (1968) has authored the most recent monograph on the subject of imperial oaths, in which he argues, *contra* Premerstein, that the loyalty oaths of the principate are an outgrowth of the conflicts of the late Republic. Though he is too trusting of the objective truth of our evidence, his reconstruction of the loyalty oath's diachronic development is convincing in broad strokes. Watson (1969), esp. 44-49, argues that the "marked conservatism of Roman religious ritual" (49) explains an alleged continuity of *sacramentum* ritual from the Republic through the late Empire. Lendon (1997) 253 views the *sacramentum* as a transaction of real social utility in the "highly sacralized community" that was the Roman army. Chrissanthos (1999) 1-12 points out the connection between *sacramenta* and *seditiones* in the Republic. Stäcker (2003) 294-306 focuses on the oath's personal and religious dimensions in the bond between *miles* and *princeps*.

⁴ My attention to Tacitus' inordinate aversion to treating armies and soldiers as a monolith is owed to Ash (1999), one of the first monographs to focus specifically on the *Histories*, and still one of the most useful.

Tacitean oaths do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they recur repeatedly within a network of other components of soldier-elite interactions—genuinely felt loyalty, mutiny, silence, ignorance, perception, among others—the sum of which constitutes a large range of the historian’s expression. This study proposes to focus in particular on one less-obvious and hitherto-unrecognized connection within this interactive network, namely the connection between oaths of loyalty and the remuneration of rank-and-file soldiers. Specifically, I argue that the Roman soldiers of the *Histories* pledge their loyalties with the expectation of receiving a range of special monetary rewards in exchange. This expectation was born out of the Julio-Claudian years, and was one of the dominant forces in the post-Neronian fallout (i.e., *Histories* 1-4). For Tacitus, Vespasian’s successes and ultimate victory (and the delays thereof) depend upon how Galbans, Othonians, Vitellians, and Flavians all handle both the oath itself and the rewards expected for it. The nature of these monetary rewards becomes increasingly violent and intense as the narrative progresses; what starts as a desire to be justly compensated, as the soldiers saw it, turns into flat-out greed. Yet at the most fundamental level, the simple fact that the act of swearing loyalty has been so thoroughly “commoditized” is a powerful symbol for the potential transience of military loyalty and the social instability of Tacitus’ civil war landscape.

The present study, like so many others of the past generation, stands on the shoulders of classicists who, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, began elucidating the ways in which Roman historiography participated in the larger project of Roman literary culture.⁵ Nearly forty years ago, T. P. Wiseman showed how the historians employed many of the same techniques of persuasion the orators did: rhetorical colorings (*colores*) allowed the historian not only to make

⁵ Wiseman (1979) distinguishes between the rhetor’s need to be persuasive and convincing, and the historian’s need only to be convincing.

the narrative more entertaining, but also more didactic as he saw fit. Using the rhetorical technique of *inventio*, historians were expected to fill in the gaps of what was “known” with what was *likely*, and thus convincing, to their intended audience. A few years later, A. J. Woodman applied Wiseman’s and similar observations to Tacitus in particular, demonstrating that several elements of the preface of the *Histories* bear remarkable similarity to Cicero’s recipe for “pleasurable history.”⁶ The implications here are wide ranging: Rome’s writers of history might draw from anywhere—not only from what “really happened,” or even only from (flawed) unliterary annals and (flawed) previous histories, but also from speeches, poems, cultural currents, and their own imaginations—in order to fashion historical meaning and narrative.⁷ This discovery, unsurprisingly, threw the interpretive doors wide open. Tacitean scholars now regularly elucidate the historian’s employment of, and debt to his prosaic (primarily historiographical) and poetic (primarily epic) predecessors.⁸ Such intertextual approaches expose, guide, and solve points of interpretation on a micro- and macro-level. Indeed, my interpretations of the words, phrases, and motifs of the *Histories* will often be informed by contributions made in this arena.

Yet the present study (with the notable exception of one section in the third chapter)⁹ is not primarily intertextual in orientation. Rather, I seek to discover how Tacitus constructs meaning via lexical and thematic relationship *within* the *Histories* and (sometimes) within his

⁶ Woodman (1988), esp. 79-80, 165-66. Cf. Woodman (1979) 154: “It think the reasons for Tacitus’ ‘substantive self-imitation’ in *Annals* 1.61-2 and 64-5 lie...in entertainment. However foreign it may be to us today, historians in the ancient world were expected to provide their readers with entertainment, *delectatio lectoris*, a responsibility of which Tacitus expresses himself only too well aware (cf. *Annals* 4.32.1, 33.2-3).”

⁷ Cf. the influential framework proposed by White (1973/2014) 5: “the historical work represents an attempt to mediate among what I will call the *historical field*, the unprocessed *historical record*, *other historical accounts*, and an *audience*” (emphasis in original).

⁸ For historiographical predecessors, Sallust and Livy in particular, see esp. Woodman (1998) and Ash (1999). For epic predecessors, see most recently Joseph (2012) and the many essays collected at Woodman (2012).

⁹ See Ch. 3, pp. 112-20.

corpus more broadly. One might—and I occasionally will—refer to such relationships between scenes by employing the convenient term *intratextual*. By this I do not mean anything particularly technical.¹⁰ Repetitions and internal allusions have long been recognized as an essential component of Tacitus’ technique.¹¹ One recent study in particular will help frame my approach: Cynthia Damon, in an essay on Tacitus’ sustained interest in various themes and scene-types (including *fides*)¹² throughout the *Histories*, concludes that the passages in question “are not must-have incidents in the narrative of 69.”¹³ Rather, Tacitus included them because he “wanted the reader to see the parallels and contrasts, not because these events demanded inclusion.”¹⁴ This is an important point—and one which owes its existence to the discoveries of Wiseman and Woodman. Much the same can be said for (failed) oaths and their attending complications: they are interesting because they did not *need* to be included; Tacitus wanted them to be. It is up to us to understand why.

It should be stated from the outset that I am not seeking a unifying picture of oaths in the *Histories*, if for no other reason than the fact that we only possess approximately one-third of the

¹⁰ Nevertheless, for a good introduction and survey of the topic, see Sharrock (2000), whose “unashamedly...theoretical” essay contains the following useful definition: “It is the hypothesis of intratextuality that a text’s meaning grows not only out of the readings of its parts and its whole, but also out of readings of the relationships between the parts, and the reading of those parts as parts, and parts as relationship (interactive or rebarbative): all this both formally (e.g. episodes, digressions, frame, narrative line, etc.) and substantively (e.g. in voice, theme, allusion, topos, etc.)—and teleologically” (6-7).

¹¹ The compellingly clear relationship between the beginnings of Tiberius’ (*primum facinus novi principatus fuit Postumi Agrippae caedes*, “the first crime of the new principate was the slaughter of Postumus Agrippa,” A. 1.6.1) and Nero’s (*prima novo principatu mors Iunii Silani proconsulis Asiae*, “the first death in the new principate belonged to Junius Silanus, proconsul of Asia,” A. 13.1.1) principates has been an area of particularly sustained interest; see Martin (1955), who cites an even older bibliography, Woodman (1997) 92, and especially Woodman (1998) 23-69. O’Gorman (2000) 144-75, esp. 145-46, has analyzed Tacitus’ professed “monotony of destruction” at A. 4.33.3 and 16.16.1-2 as a self-conscious magnification of a theme: “Tacitus’ narrative, therefore, expands the monotonous repetition, asserting the individuality of the principate’s victims but also highlighting the destructive nature of the regime as a repetitive one” (146).

¹² See Ch. 2, pp. 60-61.

¹³ Damon (2006) 275.

¹⁴ Damon (2006) 276.

full work. Still, the extant text reveals a historian deeply concerned not only with the oath as an institution, but with how that institution evolves throughout the Long Year. For that reason, I will often seek to make connections between books, arguing for resonances that span long stretches of narrative. In order to convey better the diachronic development of oaths, I will adhere to a largely chronological structure. Each of my four chapters corresponds roughly to the four fully extant books of the *Histories*. Within each chapter, my tendency is to track the relevant themes as they unfold in each acclamation scene, mutiny, campaign, or the like.

In **Chapter 1**, the terms of this discussion are more precisely defined. The *sacramentum*, the proper word for the “oath of allegiance” and a favorite word of Tacitus’, is placed within its historical context. From the start, the ritual had strong connotations of Republican ideals: loyalty to the state and fear of the gods. But by the middle of the Julio-Claudian period, the practice had come to embody a different reality: emperors ruled with the consent of the military. Offering “gifts” (*donativa*) in exchange for oaths of allegiance appears to have become commonplace. Galba, by refusing to perpetuate this recent yet entrenched tradition (which I refer to as the “*sacramentum—donativum* contract”) in the early days of January 69, drove Rome to civil war soon after his principate began. It is no accident, then, that the *Histories* begins with the breaking of oaths and grumbling over missing donatives: the work is about institutional disruption every bit as much as military and political conflict.

Chapter 2 analyzes Vespasian’s acclamation and the inauguration of the Flavian challenge in the East. Alone among our sources for these events, Tacitus’ narrative is interested in the vital role oaths play in legitimizing the new faction. The Flavians, more than any other group in 69, understand that the *sacramentum* is a tool that, used properly, can transform feelings

of genuine loyalty into lasting allegiance and a stable society. Moreover, Vespasian and Mucianus realize that donatives are a fact of life, but that excessive generosity corrupts.

Chapter 3 explores a different side of Flavian success. Antonius Primus, in order to preserve the loyalty of his legions, enacts a calculation far more brutal than the contract between oaths and gifts of the Julio-Claudians. Merely in exchange for a modicum of control over the chaos (oaths, the more formal side of loyalty, have no place in the march toward Rome), Primus encourages a different form of “remuneration”: the permission to act upon urges to plunder and murder innocents and combatants alike.

In **Chapter 4**, the chaos escalates, as Tacitus holds up a mirror to the Flavian faction in the form of the Batavian Revolt. Its instigator and leader Julius Civilis, with one foot in the barbarian world and one in the Roman, turns the Flavian tactics discussed in the previous chapters against his former patron, thereby sparking a crisis of identity worse, ironically, than any during the civil war proper. Germans swear *sacramenta* to Vespasian, while the now-dead Vitellius’ legions swear *sacramenta* to Civilis. Flavian attempts to restore normalcy are undercut by their own failure to recognize the importance of the *sacramentum-donativum* contract. When book 4 ends, we have reason to believe that dysfunctional oaths may have persisted into Vespasian’s “peace-time” emperorship.

Chapter 1

***sacramentum*: Definition, Evolution, and Rupture**

When Tacitus employs the word *sacramentum*, he means one thing: the military oath of allegiance sworn by soldiers to emperors, imperial aspirants, and their proxies (*OLD* s.v. 2a). Although *sacramentum* was the *proper* term for this type of imperial-era oath, ancient authors—Tacitus included—often opted for phrases such as *in verba adigere* or more generic oath terms such as *iusiurandum* (*iurare*).¹⁵ Yet the phenomenon of loyalty oaths merits study in Tacitean scholarship for the sheer frequency of the word *sacramentum*. The historian uses this relatively rare term a total of thirty-four times, more than any other classical author; twenty-seven times in *Histories* 1-4. To put that kind of devotion to one word into perspective, the thirty-five extant books of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* contain a mere thirty occurrences. Tacitus, perhaps more than any other Roman author, was prone to varying his expressions, even to the point of strained periphrasis.¹⁶ Thus it is all the more striking how repetitively this same technical term is employed. Add then the many times Tacitus uses *another* word or phrase for the *sacramentum*, and we have in the *Histories* the most loyalty-oath-obsessed text in Latin literature by far.

¹⁵ For the use of *iusiurandum* to denote a *sacramentum*, cf., e.g., Liv. 3.20.3-5. Every *sacramentum* (*OLD* s.v. 2a) was a *iusiurandum* (*OLD* s.v. *iuro* 5), but not every *iusiurandum* was a *sacramentum*. Scholars (see, e.g., Herrmann (1968) *passim*, Campbell (1984) 25-26, Rüpke (1990) 76-91, Chrissanthos (2003) 10n36, Pagán (2004) 10-14) have argued that “*sacramentum*” and “*iusiurandum*” in origin referred to different types of oaths, sometimes couching the distinction as one between an older “oath of office/enlistment” (“Diensteid”) and a later-developing “oath of loyalty” (“Loyalitätseid”). This line of argument relies heavily on Liv. 22.38.5, who says that, prior to the battle of Cannae, there was no other oath than the *sacramentum*, which hitherto had been voluntary. But then, for the first time, another “compulsory oath” (*iuris iurandi adactionem*) was taken at the behest of the tribunes. It is unclear, however, whether or not Livy intends for *iuris iurandi adactionem* to denote replacement of, or addition to, the *sacramentum*. In any case, Tacitus’ many usages in the *Histories* demonstrate clearly that the two related ideas of “oath of office” and “oath of loyalty” had by his day been fully assimilated. Cf. the conclusion to the discussion at Campbell (1984) 26: “It may be concluded, therefore, that when Tacitus employed the term *sacramentum*, he had in mind primarily the traditional military oath [of enlistment], and the oath of allegiance as it applied to soldiers was assumed to be part of this.”

¹⁶ Cf. A. 1.65.7, where Tacitus literally refuses to call a spade a spade.

The present chapter explores the implications of the word *sacramentum* and, more significantly, the Roman custom it denotes in three ways. In PART 1, I present a brief summary of what we think we know about the *historical sacramentum*. Against that backdrop, I begin to define how Tacitus conceives of and uses loyalty oaths in the *Histories*. Then, in PART 2, I argue that, throughout the late Republic and Julio-Claudian periods, the *sacramentum* developed increasingly intimate connections with the custom of giving cash bonuses (*donativa*, “donatives”) to soldiers. Within a relatively short time, paying for oaths appears to have been normalized. In PART 3, I approach Galba’s well-known refusal to pay *any* donatives from the perspective of this Julio-Claudian phenomenon. In particular, I argue that Tacitus organizes his narrative of the early, messy weeks of the Galba-Otho-Vitellius conflict around failures of disembodied institutions that transcend immediate political and military allegiances.

Part 1: The *sacramentum* and Tacitus

WHAT IS THE *SACRAMENTUM*?

Although I am interested primarily in the literary functions of oaths in the *Histories*, it will be necessary first to sketch out, to the best of our knowledge, (a) what the *sacramentum* was, (b) how it functioned, and (c) how it changed over time.

Like any Roman oath, the *sacramentum* had strong religious connotations.¹⁷ Its severity was imbedded in the word itself (SACRŌ + -MENTUM): he who swore the oath faced being

¹⁷ For a clear statement on the religious nature of Roman oaths (*iusiuranda*) generally, cf. esp. Cic. *Off.* 3.104: *non fuit Iuppiter metuendus ne iratus noceret, qui neque irasci solet nec nocere. haec quidem ratio non magis contra Reguli quam contra omne ius iurandum valet. sed in iure iurando non qui metus, sed quae vis sit, debet intellegi; est enim ius iurandum affirmatio religiosa; quod autem affirmate quasi deo teste promiseris, id tenendum est. iam enim non ad iram deorum, quae nulla est, sed ad iustitiam et ad fidem pertinet. nam praeclare Ennius: ‘O Fides alma apta pinnis et ius iurandum Iovis! qui ius igitur iurandum violat, is Fidem violat, quam in Capitolio vicinam Iovis*

“cursed” (*sacer*) by the gods called upon to witness it: should the oath ever be broken, the transgressor could (theoretically) be killed with impunity.¹⁸ None of this is particularly surprising, for as Helgeland puts it, “the entirety of Roman military life was imbued with what we would call ‘religion.’”¹⁹ For the Romans, a military oath was a religious and ritual act, performed publicly and according to formulaic elements of language. Once the words were spoken, the citizen (*civis*) was sanctioned, under the law, to participate in military ventures. Such sanctioning was of the utmost importance. In the *De Officiis*, Cicero discusses a letter Cato the Elder wrote to his son, warning him not to enter into battle now that he has been discharged from his legion and is no longer a *miles*, “for [Cato the Elder] says that the man who is not legally a

optimi maximi, ut in Catonis oratione est, maiores nostri esse voluerunt (“So far as oaths are concerned, what we must grasp is not the fear they induce, but their impact, for swearing an oath is a scrupulous affirmation; you must keep the pledge which you made solemnly as though God were witnessing it. What is at issue here is not the anger of the gods, which is non-existent, but justice and good faith. As Ennius so splendidly says, ‘O winged Faith with kindly eye and oath witnessed by Jupiter!’ So the man who renounces his sworn oath renounces the goddess Faith, whom our ancestors decided to set next to Jupiter Best and Greatest on the Capitol, as a speech of Cato attests,” trans. Walsh (2000)). The diversity of gods who may be called upon to witness an oath are numerous, especially in epic. In the *Aeneid*, for instance, in what happens to be a poetic version of a *sacramentum* (cf. Serv. A. 2.157), Sinon blusters: *vos aeterni ignes, et non violabile vestrum / testor numen, ait, vos arae ensesque nefandi, / quos fugi, vittaeque deum, quas hostia gessi: / fas mihi Graiorum sacrata resolvere iura* (“‘I invoke you, eternal flames and inviolable divine will,’ he says, ‘and you altars and wicked swords, which I fled, and garlands of the gods, which I wore in my role as sacrificial victim: it is divinely right that I break my sacred oaths to the Greeks...’” Verg. A. 2.154-57). Cf. Austin (1964) 81-82: “*Fas est* implies not what is compulsory but what is allowable without transgressing the law of heaven.” For other Vergilian oaths with various divine invocations, cf. A. 2.27 (Pudor); 12.195-215 (several different gods), 808-28 (Jupiter).

¹⁸ In our best preserved extant inscription of a Latin loyalty oath (*CIL* II 172 (=Smallwood (1967) 32; Herrmann (1968) 122)), quoted in full below, the people of Ariminum in Lusitania call upon Jupiter the Best and Greatest to destroy them and their family if they swear falsely. Cf. D.H. 11.43.2: ὁ τε γὰρ ὄρκος ὁ στρατιωτικός, ὃν πάντων μάλιστα ἐμπεδοῦσι Ῥωμαῖοι, τοῖς στρατηγοῖς ἀκολουθεῖν κελεύει τοὺς στρατευομένους, ὅποι ποτ’ ἂν ἄγωσιν, ὃ τε νόμος ἀποκτείνειν ἔδωκε τοῖς ἡγεμόσιν ἐξουσίαν τοὺς ἀπειθοῦντας (“Not only does the military oath, which the Romans observe most strictly of all oaths, bid the soldiers follow their generals wherever they may lead, but also the law has given the commanders authority to put to death without a trial all who are disobedient or desert their standards”). French scholars have long noted the meaning inherent in the etymology of *sacramentum*. Long ago, Meillet (1919) 126-27 suggested that *sacer*, *sacramentum*, and *sancio* approximate *hagios*, *hagnos* and *hazomai*, defining *sancio* as, “je donne la garantie religieuse à quelque chose.” He continues: “les sens de tous les mots italiques de ce groupe, qui son nombreux, se rattachent à ce sens fundamental.”¹⁸ Mohrmann (1958) 236-39 later posited that “[d]ans les mots de ce groupe prédomine tantôt l’élément religieux (*sacer*), tantôt l’élément juridique (*sancio*).” For a summation of similar language-based perspectives in older German scholarship, see Klingmüller (1920) *RE* 1A2 1669.37-1670.44 (s.v. *sacramentum*). More recently, Freyburger (1986) 202: “Nous savons en effet que les Romains avaient dans le *sacramentum* un moyen particulièrement contraignant de lier leurs soldats. Le terme, plus fort que *coniuratio*, marque la conséquence du serment, qui est de rendre *sacer*, ‘maudit,’ celui qui le violera.” See also Nicolet (1980) 102-3. On *sacer* as “accursed” more generally, see, e.g., Beard *et al.* (1998) 59.

¹⁹ Helgeland (1978) 1501.

soldier has no right to be fighting the foe” (*negat enim ius esse, qui miles non sit cum hoste pugnare*, Cic. *Off.* 1.37). An apparent interpolator elaborates:²⁰

Popilius imperator tenebat provinciam in cuius exercitu Catonis filius tiro militabat. cum autem Popilio videretur unam dimittere legionem, Catonis quoque filium, qui in eadem legione militabat, dimisit. Sed cum amore pugnandi in exercitu remansisset, Cato ad Popilium scripsit, ut, si eum patitur in exercitu remanere, secundo eum obliget militiae sacramento, quia priore amisso iure cum hostibus pugnare non poterat. adeo summa erat observatio in bello movendo. (Cic. *Off.* 1.36)

The commander Popilius was a provincial governor, and Cato’s son was serving as a raw recruit in his army. Popilius decided to discharge one legion, and as Cato’s son was serving in it, he was demobilized as well. But the boy was keen on fighting, and he remained with the army. So Cato wrote to Popilius stating that if he permitted his son to stay in the army, he should bind him to the military by means of a second oath of allegiance, for he had forfeited his earlier rights, and could not join battle with the enemy. Such was the degree of punctiliousness observed in initiating warfare. (trans. Walsh (2000), adapted)

The *sacramentum* was, in its more idealized and abstract sense, an act of initiation—a rite of passage²¹—possessing the power to transform an ordinary Roman man into a *miles* and to “bind” (*obligere*) him to that status. As we shall see throughout the present study, Tacitus occasionally draws upon and alludes to such “religious” ideas as he constructs his *sacramentum* narrative. More often than not, these ideas are left implied.

As our passages from the *De Officiis* suggest, the *sacramentum* was trotted out routinely in Republican Rome whenever new recruits were levied for campaigning season. The *milites* were “administered an oath of allegiance” (*sacramento rogati*, Serv. A. 2.157), wherein they swore, simply, to obey their commanders, fight “for the state” (*pro re publica*, Serv. A. 8.1) and

²⁰ See the thorough discussion at Dyck (1996) 143–44, who concludes: “The accumulated linguistic problems make it very doubtful that this text can stand” (144).

²¹ Cf. Gordon (1972) 94: “The swearing of the oath upon enlistment had the effect of dividing the soldier’s life into two periods: his former civilian existence and his present career. As such, the oath became a rite of passage.” For the belief that the element of initiation was primary, and the oath itself secondary, see Dölger (1930) 268 and Mohrmann (1958) 238–39, who cites as evidence Liv. 39.15.3, 10.38.2; Apul. *Met.* 11.15.

“not to desert their unit, except by order of the consul upon completion of their term of service” (*non recedere, nisi praecepto consulis post completa stipendia*, Serv. *ad A.* 7.614).²² In this period, the mere fact of saying the words seems to have mattered more than who the oath’s administrator was, since the polity at large, in whose service the levy was enacted, was the oath’s ultimate recipient.²³ It should be noted that our evidence for the specific nature of Republican-era *sacramenta* derives almost exclusively from authors of the Augustan era or later. Thus, a factually reliable picture cannot be assumed. For instance, Servius’ insistence that the sworn-in soldiers “are held for twenty-five years” (*viginti et quinque annis tenentur*, Serv. *ad A.* 2.157) is certainly an anachronism creeping in from the professional armies of the Imperial period.²⁴

As the era of the strongman dawned at the end of the Republic, oaths of allegiance seem to have adapted to meet the needs of generals jockeying with one another for power. Looking back on the conflict between Sulla and Cinna, imperial authors such as Plutarch and Appian represent the oaths sworn to those men as expressions of individual devotion above all else.²⁵ In Caesar’s account of his generation’s civil war, Caesarian partisan Curio speaks to recent arrivals

²² For similar prohibitions against desertion, cf. Liv. 22.38.4; D.H. 10.18.2, 11.43.2; Front. *Str.* 4.1.4; Isid. *Etym.* 9.3.53-55. According to the antiquarian Servius (*ad A.* 2.157), there were *tria genera militiae* (“three types of military campaign”): *militia legitima* (“standard campaign”), *coniuratio* (“emergency levy”), and *evocatio* (“call to arms”). The *sacramentum* seems primarily, perhaps exclusively, to have applied to the *militia legitima*. The latter two types may, in origin, have contained oaths, but were differentiated by their more ad hoc nature. Servius (*ad A.* 8.1) alone confirms the formula *pro re publica* for the *sacramentum*, but cf. Donatus’ comment (Don. Ter. *Eu.* 772) on Terrence’s apparently colorless line, *Simalio, Donax, Syrisce, sequamini* (“Simalio, Donax, Syrisce, follow”): *huiusmodi militia per tumultum repente suscipitur et dicitur evocatio, ubi dux alloquitur cives ‘qui rem pu. salvam vultis esse, sequamini!’* (“there is a campaign of this sort, taken up suddenly and tumultuously, called a “calling forth,” where the general says to the citizens, ‘those of you who want the state to be safe, follow me!’”). Linderski (1984) argues that *coniuratio* and *evocatio* referred to different aspects of the same concept, but that the *militia legitima*, the only one of the three certain to have contained a *sacramentum*, was distinct. Cf. Nicolet (1980) 141-42, who considers the *coniuratio* to be the ancient predecessor of the *sacramentum*.

²³ Cf. Plb. 6.21.1-3. Brunt (1974) 162-64, *contra* Mommsen I (1971) 115-19, argues (rightly) that the holder of *imperium* who enacted the levy required permission from the senate to do so. For the power of the *principes* to hold levies, cf. Cass. Dio 53.17.6.

²⁴ See, e.g., Smith (1958) 29-33 and Linderski (1984).

²⁵ For Sulla, cf. Plut. *Sull.* 27.4. For Cinna, cf. App. *BC* 1.66 and Suet. *Caes.* 23.2, with Herrmann (1968) 56. See also Brice (2003) 54n165 and 56.

from the Pompeian faction about the need to take a new oath now that they are with Caesar.²⁶ In short, loyalty to person came to supersede loyalty to office. Unsurprisingly, during the Principate, the “personalization” of the oath only intensified, as Octavian Augustus and his successors continued to stockpile the powers and prerogatives of military rule.²⁷ The oath, in fact, became synonymous in this period with expressing undying loyalty to the imperial person.²⁸ When we arrive at the Galba of the *Historiae*, Tacitus writes that the mutinous legions of Germany, lacking an obvious human recipient for their new oath, address it to the *senatus populi Romani*—“a formulation already having fallen into disuse” (*obliterata iam nomina*, 1.55.4).

We know from an accession oath inscription preserved from Caligula’s reign—the only loyalty oath in Latin preserved more or less in tact—that the swearers of these personalized oaths pledged an intense level of personal devotion:

C. Ummidio Durmio Quadratio
leg(ato) C. Caesaris Germanici imp(eratoris)
pro praet(ore).
Iusiurandum Aritiensium
Ex mei animi sententia, ut ego iis inimicus
ero, quos C. Caesari Germanico inimicos esse
cognovero, et si quis periculum ei salutiq(ue) eius
in[f]ert in[f]er[e]tque, armis bello internecivo
terra mariq(ue) persequi non desinam, quoad
poenas ei persolverit, neq(ue) me <neque> liberos meos
eius salute cariores habebo, eosq(ue) qui in

²⁶ Caes. *BC* 2.32.8-10. Cf. also 1.23 and 76 with Campbell (1984) 20-21.

²⁷ On the personal orientation of the *sacramentum* in the Imperial era as an outgrowth of the Late Republic, see esp. Herrmann (1968) 55-89 and Stäcker (2003) 293-94. Watson (1969) 44-50 emphasizes the continuity in our sources from the Republic through the late Empire, which in his view is not surprising given the “marked conservatism of Roman religious ritual (49).” Before the discovery of an inscription of a loyalty oath in Greek from Tiberius’ emperorship in (*IGR* III 137=Herrmann (1968) 123), all three of our surviving inscriptions (*CIL* II 172, *CIL* XI 6998a, and *IGR* IV 251) were all from the time of Caligula, which emphasis to be placed on the oath as a Caligulan phenomenon; see Briscoe (1971) 260.

²⁸ For the best example of a personal oath under Augustus, cf. Aug. *Anc.* 25 (discussed below) and Cass. Dio 50.6.5, 57.3.2. According to Suetonius (*Cal.* 15.3), Caligula dared to expand the oath to include his sisters as well. For a general statement on the personalized nature of the military oath in the early empire, cf. Epict. 1.14.15, with Campbell (1984) 24.

*eum hostili animo fuerint, mihi hostes esse
ducam; si s[cie]ns fa[ll]o fefellerove, tum me
liberosq(ue) meos Iuppiter Optimus Maximus ac
Divus Augustus ceteriq(ue) omnes di immortales
expertem patria incolumitate fortunisque
omnibus faxint. [a. d.] V Idus Mai(as) in
Aritiense oppido veteri Cn. Acerronio
Proculo C. Petronio Pontio Nigrino cos.
[...]* (CIL II 172=Smallwood (1967) 32=Herrmann (1968) 122)²⁹

To Gaius Ummidius Durmius Quadratus, | legate of Gaius Caesar Germanicus
Imperator | with pro praetorian power. | Oath of the Aritiensians: || It is in
accordance with my inner convictions that I will be an enemy to those | who I come
to learn are enemies to Gaius Caesar Germanicus, | and if danger to him or to his
welfare | is brought or will be brought by anyone, with armed might and war of
extermination | on land and sea I will never cease to pursue him until || he pays the
penalty to [Caesar]. Neither myself nor my children | will I consider dearer than
his welfare, and those who | will have hostile intentions toward him, I will consider
my enemies; | if knowingly I swear or will swear falsely, then | may Jupiter the
Best and the Greatest and || the deified Augustus and all the other immortal | gods
deprive me and my children of our motherland, our safety, and all our fortunes. ||
On the fifth [day before] the Ides of May in the | old town of Aritium when Gnaeus
Acerronius | Proculus and Gaius Petronius Pontius Nigrinus were consuls (37 CE).
[...] (trans. Sherk (1988), adapted)³⁰

We may note the prominence of the imperial namesake (*C. Caesari Germanico*), the professed
subordination of one's self and offspring to that one individual (*neq(ue) me <neque> liberos
meos eius salute cariores habebo*), the overwhelmingly strong concern for the emperor's
personal safety (*inimicos; periculum; salutiq(ue) eius; eius salute*), and the acceptance of a bitter
fate upon the event of the oath's violation (*si s[cie]ns fa[ll]o fefellerove, tum me liberosq(ue)
meos Iuppiter Optimus Maximus ac Divus Augustus ceteriq(ue) omnes di immortales*

²⁹ Roller (2001) 59-60 notes that this oath's identification of the emperor's enemies (*inimicus...inimicos...hostes*) as the swearer's enemies is echoed at Luc. 1.373-86, when Laelius uses "alienating rhetoric" in his fervent oath of loyalty to Caesar; cf. Luc. 7.318-22.

³⁰ Cf. Suet. *Cal.* 15.3: *de sororibus auctor fuit, ut omnibus sacramentis adiceretur: 'neque me liberosque meos cariores habebo quam Gaium habeo et sorores eius'* ("As for his sisters, Caligula ordered that the following words be added to all loyalty oaths: 'neither myself nor my children will I consider dearer than Gaius and his sisters'").

expertem patria incolumitate fortunisque omnibus faxint). It is no wonder, then, that every new princeps wanted a new oath of his own upon his accession (see PART II).

SACRAMENTUM, SEDITIO, AND FIDES: A TACITEAN NEXUS

When he composed the *Histories*, Tacitus inherited the historical and cultural baggage sketched above. A historian prone to taking the long view, he was certainly not unaware of, or uninterested in, a custom that persisted into his own era, and that continued to be vested with real significance.³¹ Yet Tacitus adapts what he inherits in the service of crafting his own literary environment. In PART 3 of this chapter, we shall explore in depth how Tacitus marshals the *plot* of *Histories* 1 around the *sacramentum* (not) sworn upon Galba's accession. But first, let us briefly establish a blueprint for how our historian situates the *sacramentum* in relation to other themes and motifs central to his narrative of civil war. To that end, three interconnected passages in *Histories* 1 will serve us well:

- (1) *paucis post kalendas Ianuarias diebus Pompei Propinqui procuratoris e Belgica litterae adferuntur, superioris Germaniae legiones rupta sacramenti reverentia imperatorem alium flagitare et senatui ac populo Romano arbitrium eligendi permittere, quo seditio mollius acciperetur.* (1.12.1)

A few days after the kalends of January, word was sent from Belgium by the procurator Pompeius Propinquus that the legions of Upper Germany had broken their respect for the oath of allegiance in demanding a new emperor, and that, in order that their mutiny be treated more leniently, they were entrusting the authority of choosing [a replacement] to the senate and people of Rome.

- (2) *infecit ea tabes legionum quoque et auxiliorum motas iam mentes, postquam volgatum erat labare Germanici exercitus fidem.* (1.26.1)

³¹ Our best evidence for the persisting relevance of the *sacramentum* in Tacitus' time comes from contemporary and friend Pliny the Younger, whose *Panegyricus*, in honor of Trajan upon his imperial accession (*Pan.* 64-65, 70) records a civilian oath ceremony, and whose letter to the emperor in 110/111, note provincial soldiers' enthusiasm upon the military oath's renewal (*Ep.* 10.52, 53). On Tacitus' relationship with Pliny, see esp. Whitton (2012). On Tacitus' engagement with Republican civil wars in the *Histories*, see the recent discussions by Ash (2010b) and Joseph (2012).

The rot [i.e., mutinous sentiment] infected the already disturbed minds of both the legions and the auxiliaries, after the news broke that the loyalty of the German army was faltering.

(3) *nec cuiquam ultra fides aut memoria prioris sacramenti, sed quod in seditionibus accidit, unde plures erant, omnes fuere.* (1.56.1)

No one had loyalty or memory of their earlier oath of allegiance, but, as happens in mutinies, everyone stood with the majority.

All three of these passages refer to the same event—German legionaries refusing to renew their oath of allegiance to the new emperor Galba in the first few days of January 69. In passage (1), Tacitus links two concepts together: (a) the military, insurrectionary separation (*seditio*) of the German legions from their patron, the emperor Vitellius; and (b) the violation of the oath (*rupta sacramenti reverentia*).³² For Tacitus, the constant, multi-faceted discord between different strata of military society operates on an abstract and concrete level—or, perhaps more accurately, on a religious and political level—simultaneously.

By pitting *seditio* against *sacramentum*, Tacitus operates on well-trodden Roman ground. Stefan Chrissanthos, in his study of mutinies in the Republic, asserts that to break the *sacramentum* was to commit *seditio*—and vice-versa.³³ Indeed, inasmuch as a *seditio* was, at root, an act of removal or desertion (SĒ(D), “apart” + EŌ, “to go”),³⁴ there is considerable evidence, preserved in literary allusions to the oath’s actual content, that substantiates Tacitus’ formulation at 1.12.1. In one representative passage, Livy explains that the Roman infantry and cavalry, drawn up in ranks, “swore that they would not quit their ranks in flight or out of fear, but only in order to retrieve or find a weapon and either strike an enemy or save a citizen with it”

³² My recognition of the importance of *seditio* in the *Histories* is owed to Manolaraki (2003).

³³ Chrissanthos (1999) 1 and 12, who engages with Brunt’s (1962) discussion of the many motivating factors in Republican soldiers’ loyalty (e.g., religious piety, the desire for land upon discharge, etc.). For a skeptical view, see Brice (2003) 55n169.

³⁴ Cf. *OLD* s.v. *seditio*.

(*coniurabant sese fugae atque formidinis ergo non abituros neque ex ordine recessuros nisi teli sumendi aut petendi et aut hostis ferendi aut civis servandi causa*, Liv. 22.38.4). The historical authenticity of Livy's formulation seems assured by the frequency with which the same phrases and sentiments crop up in a diverse array of texts.³⁵

It has become increasingly evident in recent decades just how deeply ingrained and complex were the concepts of civil war, internecine strife, and mutiny in the intellectual and literary climate of the Principate generally, and in Tacitus in particular.³⁶ In the present study, by highlighting a further manifestation of these Tacitean themes—namely, the breakage of the *sacramentum*—I hope to contribute to our understanding of this area of Tacitean historiography.

In passages (2) and (3) quoted above, Tacitus expands the semantic and conceptual scope of the *sacramentum* even further to include *fides* (*OLD* s.v. 8 “loyalty, allegiance”). In passage (2), *labare...fidem* is a reference to, and periphrastic variation on, *seditio* (1).³⁷ The juxtaposition in passage (3) between the *state* of *fides* and the *memory* of an earlier *sacramentum* crystalizes and legitimizes an important assumption of this study: when Tacitus uses the word *sacramentum*,

³⁵ Front. *Str.* 4.1.4: *ceterum ipse inter se coniurabant se fugae atque formidinis causa non abituros neque ex ordine recessuros nisi teli petendi ferendive hostis aut civis servandi causa* (“But they swore an oath among themselves that they would not depart out of flight or fear, and that they would not desert their post except to fetch a weapon or strike an enemy, or save a fellow citizen”). D.H. 10.18.2: ἐπεὶ δὲ κωλύσειν αὐτὸν ἔλεγον οἱ δήμαρχοι στρατοῦ ποιεῖσθαι καταγραφὴν, συναγαγὼν τὸ πλῆθος εἰς ἐκκλησίαν εἶπεν, ὅτι πάντες ὁμωμόκασιν τὸν στρατιωτικὸν ὄρκον, ἀκολουθήσειν τοῖς ὑπάτοις ἐφ’ οὓς ἂν καλῶνται πολέμους, καὶ μήτε ἀπολείπειν τὰ σημεῖα μήτε ἄλλο πράξειν μηθὲν ἐναντίον τῷ νόμῳ· παραλαβὼν δὲ τὴν ὑπατικὴν ἐξουσίαν αὐτὸς ἔχειν ἔφη κρατούμενους ἅπαντας τοῖς ὅρκοις (“When the tribunes said they would not permit him to enroll an army, he called an assembly of the populace and declared that since they had all taken the military oath, swearing that they would follow the consuls in any wars to which they should be called and would neither desert the standards nor do anything else contrary to law, and since he had assumed the consular power, he held them all bound to him by their oaths”). Cf. D.H. 11.43.2; Serv. *ad A.* 7.614; Isid., *Etym.* 9.3.53-55, with Linderski (1984) 76.

³⁶ On the phenomenon of *seditio* in Tacitus, see esp. Keitel (1984), Ash (1999), O’Gorman (2000) 24-39, Manolaraki (2003), Woodman (2006), Joseph (2012).

³⁷ Livy is especially fond of this *labare* metaphor: cf. 22.61.10 (the wavering of Roman loyalty at Cannae), 27.1.5 (the alleged wavering of Herdonia’s loyalty to Hannibal), and 32.30.9 (the weakening of the loyalty of the Insubres), all cited at Damon (2003) 155.

he is not simply referring in some artistic or metaphorical sense to loyalty itself; he means rather the *act* of swearing, past or present, or the absence thereof.

As we round out our lexical and conceptual nexus, one further passage in *Histories* 1 ought to be considered. Otho, hoping to consolidate his position around the empire at the beginning of his reign, encounters obstacles:

primus Othoni fiduciam addidit ex Illyrico nuntius, iurasse in eum Dalmatiae ac Pannoniae et Moesiae legiones. idem ex Hispania adlatum laudatusque per edictum Cluvius Rufus; et statim cognitum est conversam ad Vitellium Hispaniam. ne Aquitania quidem quamquam ab Iulio Cordo in verba Othonis obstricta, diu mansit. nusquam fides aut amor: metu ac necessitate huc illuc mutabantur. (1.76.1)

The first thing that boosted Otho's confidence was a messenger from Illyricum who reported that the Dalmatian, Pannonian and Moesian legions had sworn allegiance to him. The same news arrived from Spain, and Cluvius Rufus was praised in an edict. But it was soon learned that Spain had been converted over to Vitellius. Not even Aquitania, though it had been bound to Otho by oath by Iulius Cordus, stayed around long. Nowhere was there loyalty or affection: out of fear and necessity, the provinces were shifting this way and that.

Once again, Tacitus couples another concept adjacent to *fides*, namely *amor*, thereby implicitly honing his definitions. Loyalty, implies Tacitus, is not the same thing as affection, but the two are certainly connected. The *fides* (or lack thereof) in this passage is part of the *internal*, emotional life of the soldier. The *sacramentum*, on the other hand, is something that has been forced upon (*obstricta*) the Aquitanian legions—an *external* fact of a soldier's experience which may or may not reflect his true feelings.³⁸ Here, in the absence of *fides*, the imposed *sacramentum* could not last long (*ne...quidem...diu mansit*).

As we shall see throughout this study, Tacitus is fond of producing conflict and heightening dramatic tension by juxtaposed the absence or superficiality of one concept with the presence or substantiality of the other. In other words, a change of oath may not always reflect a

³⁸ For this sense of *obstringere* (*OLD* s.v. 4 “to bind”), cf. 1.54.3; A. 1.14. The issue of coerced oaths will be discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

genuine change in loyalty; nor, by the same token, does a new oath always appear the moment a new loyalty forms. Oaths can outpace loyalty, just as loyalty can outpace oaths. In the Tacitean environment, the *sacramentum* is a tool by whose means *fides*—and therefore political and military power—is variously acknowledged, manufactured, and coerced.

Even if we were to confine our discussion to Tacitus alone, the myriad roles and manifestation of *fides/Fides* in imperial society and culture is far too vast and open-ended a subject to do justice here.³⁹ Thus, in the present study we will confine our attention to Tacitus' tendency to identify mutinies and broken oaths with the absence and/or disintegration of this cardinal virtue.

PART 2: The *sacramentum-donativum* Contract

Oaths of allegiance are not the only oaths which the term *sacramentum* denotes in Classical Latin. In a legal context, it may refer either to an oath in a lawsuit where money is staked by both parties; or to the money itself in such a lawsuit (*OLD* s.v. 1).⁴⁰ The jurist Gaius explains that the *sacramentum* was a civil suit in which an amount of money was put up as collateral by both parties. The loser of the suit lost his money, which went to the public treasury (Gai. *Inst.* 4.12-14).⁴¹ If we are to understand how the same term could have applied, on the one hand, to a ritual with overtones of the divine, and, on the other hand, to a mechanism of civil law by which

³⁹ For a good formal discussion of the *sacramentum* as an aspect of *fides* (in the Republic), see Freyburger (1986) 200-6. On *fides* in the *Histories*, see Shotter (1991) 3324, and more recently Damon (2006), and Keitel (2006) 262-66.

⁴⁰ Cf. Var. *L.* 5.180.

⁴¹ Cf. Paul. *Fest.* p.344M; Cic. *Rep.* 2.60, *Fam.* 7.32.2. Hickson (1993) 112 summarizes the theory: "[O]aths also played a part in the judicial system of Rome. The most common form of early legal action (*legis actio*) required the deposit of a sum of money by both parties to a suit; the loser's money was forfeited to the state. The term for this deposit, *sacramentum*, has led many scholars to suggest that it was derived from an earlier proceeding in which the *sacramentum*, as its name implies, was actually an oath. In that situation the party whose oath was proven false was obligated to make an expiatory offering to the gods." For this type of *sacramentum*, see also Kaser (1971).

monies regularly passed from private hands to public coffers, we must first realize that the military oath of allegiance also in effect had a monetary component.

Already by the final gasps of the Republic, the loyalties of armies at times appear like little more than purchasable commodities. Yet, as we shall see, it took several decades of imperial rule for emperors to resort to outright bribery. According to our extant sources, both Claudius and his emulator Nero gave “donatives” (*donativa*)—i.e., lump-sum cash bonuses—to soldiers in exchange for their initial oaths of fealty.⁴² Such formal transfer of wealth from imperial coffers to private hands reverses Gaius’ legal definition of *sacramentum*. Henceforth, for the sake of convenience, I will occasionally refer to this cash-for-loyalty phenomenon as the “*sacramentum-donativum* contract.” When the crisis of 69 CE erupted, this contract was the operating model Galba and other power-players of that year were forced to reckon with.

My overall argument in PART 2 is not primarily historical in orientation; I make little attempt to deduce how emperors and soldiers *actually* behaved. Rather, my intention is to elucidate how Roman (and Greek) authors used oaths to express the evolving relationship between Julio-Claudian ruler and subject. The *sacramentum*, in other words, is a mechanism to explore the shifts in the style and substance of imperial rule.

THE EARLY EVIDENCE

Before turning to the Julio-Claudians, let us consider the possible Republican roots of the “monetized” *sacramentum* (*OLD* s.v. 2). Though the primary aims of PART 2 are literary in orientation, in this first section a historical survey of the evidence is attempted.

⁴² On the role of donatives amid the reciprocal relationships between the Julian-Claudians and their subjects generally, see the brief discussions at Millar (1977) 195-96, Veyne (1990) 334-43, Roller (2001) 174, and Stäcker (2001) 389-97.

We will recall that, for Tacitus, a mutiny (*seditio*) is roughly synonymous with the breaking of a *sacramentum*. Thus, Stefan Chrissanthos' thorough study of the causes and resolutions of the mutinies of the Republic (ca. 590-40 BCE) furnishes us with an excellent starting point for exploring the relationship between money and oaths in the *Histories*.⁴³ Out of forty-six mutinies he studied, eighteen (39%) were motivated by the soldiers' concern for personal wealth in the form of land grants, tax relief, salary hikes, or the distribution of plundered wealth.⁴⁴ In the early (590-280 BCE) and middle (280-90 BCE) Republican periods, when the monetary causes of mutiny were primarily in the less cash-oriented realm of land grants, debt relief, and tax relief, most such mutinies ended in failure.⁴⁵ The collective power of the common soldier had not yet risen sufficiently to leverage their loyalty into material gain. In the Late Republic (90-40 BCE), however, more than half⁴⁶ of the "monetary" mutinies were motivated by a desire for back pay (*stipendium*), plunder (*praeda*), and bonuses (*donativum*). Notably, during the 50s and 40s, most such mutinies were successful.⁴⁷ Furthermore, *all* the successful mutinies occur from 55-44 BCE, the very end of the period studied.

This statistical breakdown is not surprising. It was no doubt true that the Struggle of the Orders contained several moments when the military tribunes, working on behalf of the commons, stifled the administration of oaths, blocked the levying of troops, and led secessions from the polity in order to leverage the lower rungs of society into a better position. Even the

⁴³ Much of the content and structure of this section derives from Chrissanthos (1999) *passim*.

⁴⁴ See Chrissanthos (1999) 166-69 for a discussion of the many possible "underlying causes" of mutinies, as well as a breakdown of money as a cause into separate categories. He divides the causation of the 90-40 BCE mutinies into three "stages": (1) underlying, preexisting causes; (2) "the conditions that provided the circumstances necessary for these causes to come to the surface"; (3) "the spark that ignited the mutiny." On this topic, see also Brunt (1962).

⁴⁵ The only unmitigated successes are in 494 BCE when the First Secession results in the creation of the tribunate (Liv. 2.24-34; D.H. 6.23-28) and at Sucro in 206 BCE when P. Cornelius Scipio grants the soldiers back-pay.

⁴⁶ Six of ten, to be exact.

⁴⁷ Chrissanthos (1999) 158: The success rate for all mutinies between 90 and 40 BCE was quite high at twenty-two out of thirty.

mutiny resulting in the creation of the tribunate itself was sparked by unrest over unfair financial policies.⁴⁸ But it was in the late Republic—as soldiers’ loyalties increasingly lay with individuals rather than the offices they held, and as the *competition* for those loyalties became a fact of life under near-constant civil war—that a soldier’s pledge of fealty began to be treated as a commodity.

During most of the Republic, donatives were reserved for rewarding soldiers upon military victories.⁴⁹ When armies mutinied for money, they were primarily simply seeking payments—in the form of either salaries or spoils of war—that had been unfairly withheld.⁵⁰ However, when civil war is again taken up in the 40s, and as the frequency and severity of mutinies increases considerably, the generosity of the generals and the boldness of the soldiers likewise increases. Caesar, ever the careful cultivator of his own image, declined to discuss two mutinies that his civil war campaign suffered in 49 BCE at Placentia and again in 47 BCE in Italy. However, several later sources discuss them at length. Whereas Scipio’s men at Sucro wanted a share of the wealth obtained from plundering a foreign enemy,⁵¹ the civil war soldiers at Placentia (49 BCE) wanted to plunder friendly soil.⁵² According to Appian, the soldiers were also angry because Caesar had not paid the small donative (δωρεάν, App. *BC* 2.191) of five minae which the general had promised them. Cassius Dio describes the soldiers’ greed thus: “their hope was to obtain from him anything and everything, inasmuch as he stood in so great need of them” (Cass. Dio 41.26).

⁴⁸ Cf. Liv. 2.24-34; D.H. 4.49-55, 6.23-28, 31-32, with Chrissanthos (1999) 14-15.

⁴⁹ See Brunt (1962) 77.

⁵⁰ For examples numerous, see Chrissanthos (1999) 68-88. According to Plut. *Sull.* 27.3, when his soldiers made a voluntary oath of loyalty to him upon landing in Tarentum, they also offered to give *their* money to *him*!

⁵¹ As Chrissanthos (1999) 127 shows, although our sources of this mutiny use the episode as a demonstration of Caesar’s skilled control of his troops, in actual fact “Caesar did not quell the mutiny at all but was forced to give in to all of the soldiers’ demands.”

⁵² Cf. Luc. 5.244-48.

Though Caesar was able to quell the mutiny at Placentia by executing the ringleaders, two years later another legion mutinied at Rome. According to Appian (App. *BC* 2.92), past promises of “vague” (ἀόριστα) rewards after the Pharsalus and Africa campaigns were never fulfilled. So, when Caesar tried to end the sedition by promising a donative of another 1000 drachmas to every man, the mutineers declared that they were only interested in cold hard cash, not promises thereof (App. *BC* 2.92). Caesar himself confirms that the allegedly unfulfilled promises made in the Africa campaign were in the form of donatives (*largitionis*, Caes. *BC* 2.28). He even relates that these promises were intended to reinforce the soldiers’ memory of the oath (*sacramenti*) they had sworn (Caes. *BC* 2.28).⁵³ Similarly, Suetonius’ description of the rewards Caesar promised to his legions after crossing the Rubicon suggests the context of an already sworn oath, now appealed to: *pro contione fidem militum flens ac ueste a pectore discissa inuocauit* (“at an assembly, while crying and rending his clothes, he invoked the troops’ loyalty,” Suet. *Caes.* 33). Ancient authors agree that these mutineers got paid what they were owed in the end.⁵⁴ Thus, even at this early date, there is evidence that the symbolic binding power of the *sacramentum* was giving way to matters of money.

THE EVOLUTION FROM TIBERIUS TO NERO

Overview

Close analysis of Tacitus’ *Annals* and other sources, especially Suetonius, reveals an ancient perspective on the Julio-Claudians not hitherto recognized—namely, that that era saw a gradual

⁵³ For other, less explicit passages in Caesar which merely hint at a connection between money and oaths, see *BC* 1.23 and 85-86.

⁵⁴ Chrissanthos (1999) 135n515 provides a list of the relevant passages; cf. Plut. *Caes.* 51, Cass. Dio 42.54, App. *BC* 2.94, Suet. *Caes.* 70.

debasement of the intrinsic value of the *sacramentum* over time.⁵⁵ Following Tacitus' lead, we begin our discussion with Tiberius' accession. In the second princeps, Tacitus portrays a cautious man reluctant to deviate from the *unpurchased* oaths of Augustan propaganda. Tiberius' primary concern is *appearing* to be honoring the legacy of his predecessor. After Tiberius, the power of the Augustan attitudes toward oaths appear to dissipate. Though the loss of *Annals* 6-10 deprives us of Tacitus' accounts of the inauguration of Caligula's and Claudius' reign, according to Suetonius, Claudius "was the first of the Caesars who resorted to bribery to secure the fidelity of the troops" (*primus Caesarum fidem militis etiam praemio pigneratus*, Suet. *Cl.* 10). Suetonius' assessment certainly conforms with Tacitus' Tiberian narrative. Furthermore, *Annals* 12-16 contain indications that, by the age of Nero, loyalty through bribery had become the custom in the land.

Tiberius

Tacitus' inaugural account of Agrippa Postumus' murder—"the first crime of the new principate" (*primum facinus novi principatus*, *A.* 1.6.1)—introduces two notions that will recur throughout the Tiberian hexad: (1) Tiberius wants to give his actions the appearance of following Augustus' wishes ("he was pretending there were orders from his father," *patris iussa simulabat*, *A.* 1.6.1);⁵⁶ (2) the crimes of Tiberius' reign will not be punished, since Rome's political class has been cowed into submission ("At Rome the consuls, senators, and knights rushed into servility," *at Romae ruere in servitium consules patres eques*, *A.* 1.7.1).

⁵⁵ Veyne (1990) 334-43, who provides the first study of the function of *donativa*, comes closest to seeing the particular connection between oaths and gifts, but stops short of the sort of explicit oath-gift reciprocity argued for in this study. Furthermore, he mistakenly downplays the personal relationship between soldiers and emperors: "Apart from military ceremonial and inspections, the Emperor's relationship with his soldiers was as impersonal as with the mass of his officials. ... The fact remains that, although not a citizen army, neither was the Imperial army a band of liegemen devoted to their leader, the sovereign" (335).

⁵⁶ According to Tacitus' assessment, it is more credible (*propius*) that Tiberius and Livia were responsible for the murder (1.6.2).

With the tone of the first days of Tiberius' emperorship thus set, Tacitus describes a different, more official sort of inaugural moment:

*Sex. Pompeius et Sex. Appuleius consules primi in verba Tiberii Caesaris iuravere, apudque eos Seius Strabo et C. Turrianus, ille praetoriarum cohortium praefectus, hic annonae; mox senatus milesque et populus. [3] nam Tiberius cuncta per consules incipiebat, tamquam vetere re publica; et, ambiguus imperandi, ne edictum quidem quo patres in curiam vocabat nisi tribuniciae potestatis praescriptione posuit sub Augusto acceptae.*⁵⁷ (A. 1.7.2-3)

Sextus Pompeius and Sextus Appuleius as consuls were the first to swear allegiance to Tiberius Caesar, and in their presence Seius Strabo and C. Turrianus, the former being prefect of the praetorian cohorts, the latter of the food supply; next came the senate, soldiery and the people. [3] For, in fact, Tiberius initiated everything through the consuls, as though it were the old republic; and, being ambivalent about commanding, even when he posted the edict by which he summoned the fathers to the curia, he headed it only with the tribunician power received under Augustus.⁵⁸

This scene, though perhaps not obviously compelling, is in fact infused with the quiet drama of the first imperial succession.⁵⁹ A detailed re-examining of its precise language will lead to a deeper understand of the development of the Tacitean *sacramentum*. The semi-colon in the above translation after *tamquam vetere re publica* follows A. J. Woodman, who recognizes that *et ambiguus imperandi* begins a new thought.⁶⁰ In some other respects, however, our interpretations of the passage part ways. Woodman translates the phrase *Tiberius cuncta per consules incipiebat* as “Tiberius’ entire start was through the consuls,” explaining it as “a forward reference to the formal motion which the consuls placed before the senate at its *second* meeting [at] 1.13.4.”⁶¹ I, on the other hand, suggest that *nam*, which Woodman translates “and in

⁵⁷ Punctuation follows Woodman (1998) 67.

⁵⁸ Translation adapted from Woodman (2004) 5, with some key alterations (See below).

⁵⁹ Commentators have tended to focus on categorizing and defining the historical parameters of oath, rather than determine its role in the narrative; see Mommsen III (1887) 792-93, von Premerstein (1937) 73-74, Millar (1963) 328. For a useful summary of their positions, see Goodyear (1972) 138-39.

⁶⁰ Woodman (2004) 5n18. I have also changed the Latin punctuation in Heubner’s text to reflect this.

⁶¹ Woodman (2004) 5n18 (emphasis in the original); for the full argument of the passage’s structure, see Woodman (1998) 66-69. Though I disagree with Woodman’s article on this one point, his ability to see beyond inherited *communis opinio* about Tiberius is impressive.

fact,” be taken to introduce a common explanatory clause (*OLD* s.v. 2 “for”), and that *Tiberius cuncta per consules incipiebat* thus be read closely with the description of the *sacramentum* immediately preceding it.⁶² In that case, *incipiebat*, a transitive verb with *Tiberius* as subject, would neatly pick up on the idea of the primacy (*primi*) of the consular oaths in the previous sentence. With *cuncta*, Tacitus gathers “all” the various *sacramenta* of the previous sentence—consular, praetorian, senatorial, and military, in that order—and subordinates them to Tiberius’ designs. I therefore propose the following expansive paraphrase of A. 17.2-3: various individuals and groups, beginning with the consuls, swore an oath of allegiance to Tiberius. They swore their oaths in this manner—i.e., with the consuls swearing first—because Tiberius had arranged it that way (*incipiebat*). That way, the whole affair would have the veneer of an old-fashioned oath from a time before the principate.

If this interpretation of A. 1.7.2-3 is correct, the full implications are profound. Tiberius, not the consuls, had ultimate control over the oath-taking process. But, mindful of the traditional power of the consuls, he allowed them to make the first move. Thus, Tacitus creates tension between the authority Tiberius actually possessed, and the deference to tradition the new emperor wanted to cultivate. Yet, by introducing the following sequence with *ambiguus imperandi*, Tacitus reminds us that Tiberius’ devotion to controlling Roman affairs is far from absolute.

⁶² The explanatory *nam* is plentiful in Tacitus, as one might expect. Perhaps the most prominent instance occurs in the second sentence of the *Histories* (*nam post conditam urbem...*, 1.1.1). Cf. Sailor (2008) 122: “*nam*...has much work to do, and the words that follow it assure that the reasons for beginning here and not elsewhere are big and important and fit into a grand scheme.”

The language used for the oath-taking itself, *in verba Tiberii Caesaris iuravere*, finds an almost identical antecedent in Augustus' commemoration of his own accession to unprecedented power:⁶³

iuravit in mea verba tota Italia sponte sua, et me belli, quo vici ad Actium, ducem depoposcit; iuraverunt in eadem verba provinciae Galliae, Hispaniae, Africa, Sicilia, Sardinia. (Aug. *Anc.* 25)

All of Italy of its own accord swore allegiance to me, and demanded that I be the general in the war which I waged victoriously at Actium. The Gallic and Spanish provinces, Africa, Cilicia, and Sardinia swore the same oath.

Here, in his own version of events published for the world to see, Augustus states that the Italian oaths sworn in his name were the result of spontaneous support from the masses (*sponte sua*). Suetonius, on the other hand, implies top-down control: “[Augustus] excused the people of Bologna from joining in the oath-taking” (*Bononiensibus quodque publice...gratiam fecit coniurandi*) due to their longstanding patron-client relationship with Mark Antony (Suet. *Aug.* 17.2). Peter Herrmann, who first noticed the discrepancy, insists that the biographer offers a factual corrective to the emperor's propaganda.⁶⁴ Leaving questions of historical accuracy aside, Suetonius' dissenting version of events colors the *Res Gestae* passage in two ways: (1) it suggests that Augustus' claim of receiving a voluntary *sacramentum* was disputed in antiquity; and (2), more importantly, it speaks to the high value the emperor placed on reputation for spontaneous acclamation.

Why did Augustus want people to think that these oaths were voluntary? Most obviously, such a message, if believed, militates against allegations of coercion or tyranny. But there is a more proactive tactic at play here as well, for the phrase *sua sponte* appears to invoke nostalgic,

⁶³ Cf. Cass. Dio 50.6.5, 57.3.2.

⁶⁴ Herrmann (1968) 78: [my translation] “It is beyond dispute that the same oath-taking of 32 BCE is meant in a brief remark in Suetonius. ... This bit of information is important, since it corrects the characterization of voluntary oath-taking emphasized in the *Res Gestae*, and thereby comes closer to reality.” Cf. Pagán (2004) 14.

historiographical memory of Rome's early republican past. Livy, in his description of the installation of compulsory *sacramenta* during the Second Punic War, pays final tribute to a time when freshly levied troops pledged their lives to the state “of their own free will” (*sua voluntate*, 2.38.4).⁶⁵ It is easy to see why Augustus, who cultivated an image as restorer of Republican ideals, would want to tap into the same rhetorical vein, and align himself with Rome's idealized past.⁶⁶

Perhaps nostalgic Livian notions of voluntary oaths appealed to Tiberius as well. Or perhaps Tiberius looked no further than Augustus' own self-presentation. In either case, by running the *sacramentum* through the consuls (A. 1.7.2-3), and then allowing it to ripple outward after that (*mox senatus milesque et populus*, A. 1.7.3), Tacitus' Tiberius gives the impression of broad and enthusiastic support for his principate, when in fact he was pulling the strings off stage (*incipiebat*). Such a balance between public emulation of Augustan propaganda and private machinations is unique to Tacitus' account. Dio Cassius, for instance, has Tiberius taking an active role in securing power directly from the military: “For he had previously made sure of the soldiers in Italy by means of the oaths of allegiance established by Augustus...” (τοὺς μὲν γὰρ ἐν τῇ Ἰταλίᾳ ὄντας τοῖς ὅρκοις τοῖς ὑπὸ τοῦ Αὐγούστου καταδειχθεῖσι προκατέλαβεν, Dio Cass. 57.3.2).⁶⁷ Tiberian finesse is shown once again to be more Tacitean invention than consensus history.

⁶⁵ Scholars largely accept the historicity of Livy's account. See, e.g., von Petrikovits (1983) 191, Campbell (1984), Rüpke (1990) 77, Brice (2003) 54. Herrmann (1968) 60-89, however, presents evidence that some form of compulsory “Dienstleid” proposed by Herrmann existed as early as the fourth century: in 378 BCE, the tribunes block the levy of troops (6.31.4-5); but in the following year, when the Patricians get their own men elected as tribunes, “no one can prevent [the Patricians] from enrolling three legions and administering the oath to them” (*nullo impediēte omnibus iunioribus sacramento adactis tres exercitus scriberent*, Liv. 6.32.4).

⁶⁶ See Briscoe (1971) 262.

⁶⁷ Cf. Cass. Dio 50.6.6.

In the first meeting with the senate following the oath, Tiberius wants to keep the focus on the recently deceased Augustus rather than on himself (“nothing did he allow to be discussed on the first day of the senate except the last rites of Augustus,” *nihil primo senatus die agi passus nisi de supremis Augusti*, 1.8.1). So it makes sense that, rather than dispense bribes, awards, or donatives in his *own* name upon succession, Tiberius is content merely to oversee the dispensation of Augustus’ legacies:

legata non ultra civilem modum, nisi quod populo et plebei CCCCXXXV, praetoriarum cohortium militibus singula nummum, legionariis aut cohortibus civium Romanorum trecentos nummos viritim dedit. (A. 1.8.1)

[Augustus’] legacies did not go beyond the limits of an ordinary citizen, except that he gave 43,500,000 sesterces to the people and plebs, individual donations of a thousand each to the soldiers of the Praetorian cohorts, and three hundred a man to the legionaries and the cohorts consisting of Roman citizens. (trans. Woodman (2004))

The civilian and military parties who receive these bequests represent many of the same groups who took the oath above (1.7.2-3). Implicit in Tiberius’ total focus on Augustus’ generosity is a decision *not* to reward the people and military for their loyalty from his own coffers, which would have initiated a reciprocal relationship between him and his new subjects. In other words, there is no direct connection between oaths and donatives in Tacitus’ account of Tiberius’ accession. In fact, during Tiberius’ reign, *largitio* is reserved for responding to and remedying specific crises; it is never used for securing loyalty.⁶⁸ Such fiscal conservatism is consistent with displays of imperial stinginess throughout the Tiberius hexad.⁶⁹ The word *donativum* does not even appear in the extant *Annals* until 12.41. Even Germanicus resists the use of bribery to soothe his mutinous troops until he has no other choice (A. 1.36-37).

⁶⁸ For Tiberian miserliness in Tacitus, cf. A. 1.75; 2.42, 47-48; 4.13, 64; 6.45.1.

⁶⁹ A. 4.62.2, 6.45.1; cf. Suet. *Tib.* 46-48.

At the same first meeting with the senate, Tiberius bristles at a motion to enact an annual renewal of the *sacramentum*:

addebat Messala Valerius renovandum per annos sacramentum in nomen Tiberii; interrogatusque a Tiberio num se mandante eam sententiam prompsisset, sponte dixisse respondit, neque in iis quae ad rem publicam pertinerent, consilio nisi suo usurum, vel cum periculo offensionis: ea sola species adulandi supererat. (A. 1.8.4)

Messala Valerius added that the oath in Tiberius' name should be renewed annually; and, when asked by Tiberius whether it was on his instruction that he had produced such a suggestion, he responded that he had spoken spontaneously and that in a matter which pertained to the state he would resort to no one's counsel but his own, even at the risk of offense. (That was the only display of sycophancy left to be tried.) (trans. Woodman (2004))

In this would-be second oath scene of his young principate, Tiberius' fear of appearing tyrannical is once again evident.⁷⁰ Indeed, a dichotomy clearly existed between the undesirability of compulsory oaths (*se mandante*) on the one hand, and the respectability of voluntary (*sponte*) oaths on the other. Like Augustus in the *Res Gestae*, and Tiberius in his own accession (A. 1.7.2-3), the new emperor here comes across as deeply concerned that he not be seen as exacting or even inviting oaths of loyalty.

A decade or so previously in the *Histories*, Tacitus had provided confirmation that the practice of annually renewing the *sacramentum* was certainly enacted at some point under the Julio-Claudians (H. 1.55).⁷¹ Here, Tacitus is not so forthcoming: though it has usually been assumed that Tiberius rejects Messala's proposal, this is by no means clear from the text as written.⁷² Perhaps, stylist that he was, he felt that the mere historical fact of the passage or

⁷⁰ Pace Goodyear (1972) 138, who unduly assumes that *in verba Tiberii Caesaris iuravere* (A. 1.7.2) and *renovandum per annos sacramentum in nomen Tiberii* (A. 1.8.4) refer to the same oath.

⁷¹ Pliny confirms the continuation of the practice of renewal in two letters to Trajan (Plin. Ep. 10.52, 53). Sherwin-White (1966) 633 notes (rightly) that these letters record the renewal of the oath upon the anniversary of Trajan's *dies imperii* (28 January), not the beginning of the consular year (1 January).

⁷² Premerstein (1937) 60-62 argues that Tiberius resists instituting annual renewal of the loyalty oath throughout his entire reign, and that the custom does not begin until the reign of Caligula. Goodyear (1972) 148-49 agrees: "The context and the silence of our sources on any such practice during his reign indicate that Tiberius rejected the proposal. But yearly renewal of the oath of loyalty began under Gaius and became normal thereafter...." Herrmann

blockage of the proposal was too obvious to articulate—or too mundane. If I am right in understanding *se mandante* to refer to an actual articulated wish on Tiberius' part for annual renewal, then it is quite difficult to image that the measure was not enacted at some point in Tiberius' reign. Yet the sheer fact that it is impossible, based on Tacitus' words alone, to determine for a certainty when the custom was enacted suggests that Tacitus' primary concern lay not with the *result* of the confrontation between Messala and Tiberius, but with the fact that there was a confrontation in the first place. I would even suggest that Tacitus' focus on conflict over result is mimetic of Tiberius' own mind: the second Julio-Claudian emperor comes across as placing a greater value on *appearing* to uphold good Augustan values, such as the strength and independence of the senate, than on *actually establishing* the terms and frequency of the *sacramentum*.

We may draw the following conclusions about the state of the *sacramentum* at the beginning of the *Annals*: (1) The *sacramentum*—both the one taken upon accession and the unanswered question of its annual renewal—is a prominent feature of Tacitus' depiction of the start of Tiberius' reign, and is therefore a prominent feature of the start of the *Annals*. (2) Tiberius makes no attempt to reinforce either civilian or military loyalty with personal gifts or bribes. (3) Like Augustus before him, Tiberius wants these oaths to *appear* voluntary, even if

(1968) 107-10, drawing primarily from crumbs of oblique evidence scattered throughout Cassius Dio, argues that “the annual repetition of the emperor-oath in the senate, in conjunction with the oath to the *acta* of the ruler, emerged already under Tiberius” (my translation). Briscoe (1971) 262. Stäcker (2003) 295 stakes out a much less precise, but more sensible, position: working backwards from the mentions of 1 January oath renewal in the *Histories* (1.55.1, primarily), he asserts cautiously that the institutionalization of the oath's annual repetition occurred sometime before 69 CE, thus suggesting that Tacitus does not definitively confirm the existence of the renewal anywhere in the *Annals*. At the end of the *Annals*, however, during the reign of Nero, we receive a fairly clear *terminus ante quem* for the renewal of *civilian* loyalty oaths at least: *quin et illa obiectabat [Capito], principio anni vitare Thraseam sollemne ius iurandum* (“Moreover, he hurled other imputations too against him: that at the beginning of the year Thrasea would avoid the solemn oath,” 16.22; trans. Woodman (2004)). For the custom of offering annual inaugural prayers during Tiberius' reign, cf. A. 4.70.1. If referring to the *sacramentum*, Gaius *dig.* 50.16.233.1 dates the renewal to 3 January: *post Kal. Ian. die tertio pro salute principis vota suscipiuntur* (“oaths (vows?) for the emperor's health and safety are taken up three days after the kalends”); cf. A. 4.17.1.

they are not. But Tiberius is no Augustus. The enduring effect of the propagandistic line of *sua sponte* (Aug. *Anc.* 25), Tacitus implies, is only as strong as each succeeding emperor's ability and willingness to replicate Augustus' example.

Caligula

Before we turn to Claudius, a brief word ought to be said about the accession of Tiberius' successor and grand-nephew Caligula, whose entire brief reign was contained in the lost books of the *Annals*. According to Cassius Dio, Caligula "was afraid of both the people and the army" (φοβηθεὶς καὶ τὸν δῆμον καὶ τοὺς στρατιώτας, Cass. Dio 59.2). Thus, in addition to dispensing money in the name of his deceased predecessor as Tiberius had done, he contributed some of his own funds as well (Cass. Dio 59.3). There is no sense from Cassius Dio, however, that Caligula's position was contingent upon such generosity. Furthermore, Suetonius' quite different account emphasizes Caligula's phenomenal *popularity*; no donatives are even mentioned and, based on the biographer's bombast, hardly appeared necessary (*Cal.* 13-14). Thus, based on the extant accounts, there is little ground on which to argue for a significant departure from Tiberius' accession.

Claudius

Though *Annals* 11-12 are devoted to Claudius' reign, Tacitus' depiction of his accession was contained in the lost books. Thus if we are to learn about that event, we must turn to our other sources: Josephus, Cassius Dio, Plutarch, and especially for the purposes of this study, Suetonius.

Claudius' reign was marked by the accumulation and distribution of considerable wealth. The accumulation was due in part to the fact that Claudius was the only Julio-Claudian emperor

(after Augustus) to undertake profitable foreign conquests.⁷³ As for the distribution of wealth, we have evidence from throughout his principate of *congiaria* (“gratuities”) being granted to civilians, as well as *stipendia* (“salaries”) and *donativa* (“bonuses”) being granted to soldiers and veterans.⁷⁴ The praetorian guard, the military body that first proclaimed Claudius emperor, was an especially frequent recipient of imperial gifts and honors. In a recent monograph, Osgood points to several dimensions of interdependence between the fourth emperor and his local army.⁷⁵ It is indicative of the closeness of that relationship that Claudius was the first princeps to enact the practice of holding military discharge ceremonies, granting stipends, and granting citizenship in Temple of Fides on the Capitoline Hill.⁷⁶

The etymological root of *donativum* (*donare*) suggests voluntary expressions of largess from emperor to soldier.⁷⁷ And indeed, as we have seen in the foregoing discussion, Tiberius’ oath of allegiance *coincided* with granting gifts, but these two customs do not seem to have constituted an explicit transaction.⁷⁸ According to Suetonius, that changed with Claudius. It was the fourth Julio-Claudian emperor who, in order to secure his imperial proclamation, first bought the soldiers’ loyalty outright:

verum postero die et senatu segniore in exsequendis conatibus per taedium ac dissensionem diversa censentium et multitudine, quae circumstabat, unum rectorem iam et nominatim exposcente, armatos pro contione iurare in nomen suum passus est promisitque singulis quina dena sestertia, primus Caesarum fidem militis etiam praemio pigneratus. (Suet. Cl. 10.4)

⁷³ For Claudius’ conquest and looting of Britain, see Griffin (1984) 202 and Osgood (2011) 84-106.

⁷⁴ For a summary of our knowledge of Claudius’ many expenditures, in the form of both *donativa* and *congiaria*, see Duncan-Jones (1994) 257 and Burgers (2001), esp. 105.

⁷⁵ For the many donatives Claudius paid to the Praetorians, see esp. Osgood (2011) 31, 35-37, 235-36, who also notes that the Praetorian Guard featured prominently in public displays of Claudius’ foreign military conquests (101).

⁷⁶ See Grant (1974) 155 and Helgeland (1978) 1502.

⁷⁷ Thus, the *OLD* defines it as “a sum of money given as a gratuity to each soldier by the Roman Emperor on an occasion of public rejoicing” (emphasis added). Cf. *TLL* v/1.1990.74.

⁷⁸ See pp. 27-28 above.

But on the following day, since the senate was slow in carrying out its plans due to the tedious bickering of those who held divergent views, while the populace, who were standing all around, called for one ruler expressly by name, [Claudius] allowed the armed assembly of the soldiers to swear allegiance to him, and promised each man fifteen thousand sesterces;⁷⁹ being the first of the Caesars who resorted to bribery to secure the fidelity of the troops. (trans. Rolfe (1914), adapted)

Josephus' account of this scene, though silent on the subject of historical precedence, corroborates some of the core elements of Suetonius' story. The centrality of Claudius' payout in the securing of loyalty is evident:

Κλαύδιος δὲ τῷ στρατῷ συλληχθέντι διελέγετο ὄρκους λαμβάνων ἥ μὴν ἐμμενεῖν πίσται τῇ πρὸς αὐτόν, δωρεῖται τοὺς σωματοφύλακας πεντακισχίλιας δραχμαῖς κατὰ ἕκαστον ἄνδρα, τοῖς τε ἡγεμόσιν αὐτῶν ἀνάλογον τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ καὶ τοῖς ὅποι ποτὲ στρατοπέδοις ὑπισχνεῖτο τὰ ὅμοια. (Jos. *AJ* 19.4.2)

But Claudius conversed with the soldiers gathered around him, as they swore to persist in their loyalty to him; upon which he gave this bodyguards five thousand drachmae apiece, and a proportionally appropriate amount to their captains, and promised to give the same to the rest of the armies wherever they were.⁸⁰

15,000 sesterces (Suetonius' figure) was five times the normal annual pay of the already exceptionally well-compensated praetorian guard.⁸¹ Caligula had also payed the praetorians a donative upon his accession, but it was nowhere near that lavish—1,000 sesterces a head, according to Cassius Dio.⁸² The notion, as Suetonius claims, that Claudius' donative functioned as a payment in exchange for an oath of loyalty goes a long way toward explaining the jump from 1,000 to 15,000. Furthermore, the appeal of such a large donative in the 40s CE makes complete sense, given what we know about larger trends in legionary salaries: between the reigns

⁷⁹ Jos. *AJ* 19.247 puts the amount at 5000 sesterces; see Brunt (1955) 55n38.

⁸⁰ On the Josephus' notice of the expansion of the oath to the provinces, cf. Osgood (2011) 32-34: "[T]he clear solution was for Claudius to do as he did with the [p]raetorians, and offer all of the troops substantial cash payments. News of the bounty would reach them, it can be surmised, just as they were asked to renew their oaths of loyalty in the name of the emperor."

⁸¹ Levick (1990) 32 astutely notes that "[t]he praetorians did not have only donatives in mind: they were concerned for the very survival of their corps if the principate as they knew it came to an end." See also Osgood (2011) 35-36.

⁸² Cass. Dio 59.2.1; see Osgood (2011) 36. Tiberius (*A.* 1.8.1) also paid the praetorians 1000 sesterces each, while the legionaries received only 300 sesterces.

of Augustus and Domitian, the legions received no pay raises.⁸³ Thus, if they had any hope of receiving extra pay, they had to rely on extra perks and bonuses.⁸⁴ According to Cassius Dio, Claudius, never forgetting how he won the praetorians' loyalty in the first place, gave them a 100 sesterces donative every year on the anniversary of his accession.⁸⁵

Suetonius' account, though partially corroborated by Josephus and Cassius Dio, is not without its own *internal* obstacles to credibility. Two aspects in particular are difficult to reconcile. On the one hand, the need to resort to bribery for the first time (*primus Caesarum*, Suet. *Cl.* 10.4) suggests that Claudius was in a relatively weak position compared to his predecessors. On the other hand, both the common soldier who initially found Claudius hiding in the palace and acclaimed him emperor (10.2) as well as the common people (*multitudine*, *Cl.* 10.4) willingly *chose* him—a fact which suggests that he was not entirely disliked. These two elements, when considered together, render a strange scene: the Claudius of Suetonius' account was not seeking power, yet felt obliged to engage in unprecedented bribery in order to secure the loyalty of the soldiers who voluntarily chose—even forced themselves upon—him!

Donna Hurley points out that, when we compare Suetonius' account to those of Cassius Dio (60.1.3) and Josephus (19.4.2), the reluctance conveyed by *passus est* (*Cl.* 10.4) appears out of place: the historical Claudius was likely eager to secure power for himself⁸⁶—or at least was complicit in acquiring it. If that is true, then Suetonius simply failed to convey adequately the

⁸³ See Suet. *Aug.* 49.2 and *Dom.* 7.3 with Haynes (2013) 47-48.

⁸⁴ This financial reality renders questionable the insistence of Stäcker (2003) 389-96 that soldiers cared more about the *symbolic* fact of simply receiving a donative, than they did about its amount.

⁸⁵ Cf. Stäcker (2003) 398 [my translation]: "Under the Caesars of the first and second centuries CE, only Claudius is known to have perpetuated the anniversary of his accession to power with the awarding of a donative to the praetorians. . . . This otherwise apparently uncommon donative must have strengthened an already close relationship between Claudius and the praetorians."

⁸⁶ Hurley (2001) 100. Cf. Osgood (2011) 30: "There can be little doubt that the Praetorians did accept Claudius as *imperator*, swear an oath of allegiance to him, and force the Senate to accept their acclamation. And there can be no doubt that, in the eyes of each other anyway, the cooperation of Claudius and the Praetorians was essential."

disingenuousness of Claudius' reluctance.⁸⁷ Of course, Suetonius' accounts of the emperors' lives are inadequate in many demonstrable ways.⁸⁸ Yet there is a solution which reconciles the apparently divergent aspects of the surviving accounts without necessarily invalidating any of them. Perhaps Suetonius believes that the soldiers chose Claudius precisely *because*, in the absence of any *dignitas* or military experience, Claudius had no choice but to bribe his way toward their respect. The passive Claudius is in a weak position—a fact amplified when he falls to *his* knees as *he* is saluted emperor! (*prae metu ad genua sibi accidentem imperatorem salutavit*, 10.2). Whether this portrait of a Claudius who is simultaneously weak, passive and power-grasping captures the facts of the real historical moment is impossible to say. What we *can* say is that the different aspects of the account cohere tolerably well internally and cannot be disproved by external sources.⁸⁹ In short, the possibility of Suetonius' narrative containing a truth-value that would have been recognizable to a larger Roman audience cannot be discounted.

Nero

It should be stressed at this point that accounts of Claudius' life can help us fill in historical gaps, but they cannot tell us how Tacitus would have written *his* Claudian accession narrative. Yet that does not render Suetonius' biography useless, even in a historiographical study such as this one. First of all, there are some arguments from probability that deserve to be made—though not pressed: For instance, we might reasonably suspect that, given the attention he paid to oaths in his earlier work, the *Histories*, Tacitus would have addressed the subject of praetorian oaths in

⁸⁷ Hurley (2001) 100.

⁸⁸ Indeed, according to Hurley (2001) 100-1, Suetonius is only technically correct when he writes that Claudius *primus Caesarum fidem militis etiam praemio pigneratus* (Suet. *Cl.* 10.4): he is the first emperor “to promise a large gift in the context of the initial oath but not the first to treat the military with calculated generosity.” For the calculated generosity of past emperors, see A. 1.36, Suet. *Tib.* 48.2, Cass. Dio 59.2.1.

⁸⁹ Cf. Campbell (1984) 187 and Stacker (2003).

his lost account of Claudius' accession. Furthermore, we might even be reasonably safe in assuming that, given the forcefulness with which Suetonius declares Claudius the first emperor to purchase oaths, Tacitus would have weighed in on the matter as well. Ultimately, such speculation must remain just that. There are, however, rather more concrete connections to be drawn between *Annals* 12-16 and Suetonius' *Claudius*: Tacitus' depiction of Nero's accession, as we shall see, contains clear evidence that, at the very least, the *sort* of Claudian precedent Suetonius describes at *Cl.* 10 (a) has been accepted by Tacitus as factual and (b) has been carried over into the reign of Nero.

Nero, like his adoptive father, is made emperor by the praetorian guard in the immediate aftermath of an imperial assassination. It is no wonder, then, that Nero resorts to the same tactics of bribery:

tunc medio diei tertium ante Idus Octobris, foribus palatii repente diductis, comitante Burro Nero egreditur ad cohortem, quae more militiae excubiis adest. ibi monente praefecto faustis vocibus exceptus inditur lecticae. dubitavisse quosdam ferunt, respectantis rogantisque ubi Britannicus esset: mox nullo in diversum auctore quae offerebantur secuti sunt. inlatusque castris Nero et congruentia tempori praefatus, promisso donativo ad exemplum paternae largitionis, imperator consalutatur. (A. 12.69)

Then, in the middle of the day, on the third before the Ides of October, with the doors of the Palatium suddenly flung open, in the company of Burrus, Nero emerged toward the cohort which, in military fashion, was present as lookout. There, at the prefect's warning, he was welcomed by festive voices and placed in a litter. (They say that some hesitated, looking around and asking repeatedly where Britannicus was; but soon, with no one to authorize differently, they followed what was being offered.) Carried to the camp, and after some preliminary words suited to the moment (and the promise of a donative on the example of his father's lavishness), Nero was hailed as "Commander." (trans. Woodman (2004))

Though the *sacramentum* is not mentioned in this passage explicitly, it is quite clear that the acclamation itself (*consalutatur*) is contingent upon the ablative absolute *promisso donativo*.

Tacitus further informs us that the young Nero's generous donative has been inspired by

Claudius' example (*ad exemplum paternae largitionis*). Since, as we saw above, Tiberius eschewed giving donatives in his own name upon succession (A. 1.7), and since the accounts of Caligula's reign give no indication of any deviation from the Tiberian example, the phrase *ad exemplum paternae largitionis* strongly suggests that Tacitus, like Suetonius, did in fact characterize Claudius' donatives as novel and innovative in a lost passage of the *Annals*. *paternae* (OLD s.v. 1) certainly implies that the example only extends back one generation.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the lack of explanation or elaboration regarding what precise example Claudius set implies that the reader already knows about the *sacramentum-donativum* contract from the lost Claudian books.—Or, to give the same idea a Tacitean flavor: by remarking on the fact that Nero was merely following his father' example, Tacitus implies that Nero did nothing remarkable.

Throughout the rest of the extant *Annals*, Tacitus provides snapshots of a Neronian world in which rampant largess (*largitio*) has become normalized.⁹¹ In a particularly striking example from before Nero was even emperor (51 CE), the sycophantic senate flattered a fourteen-year-old Nero by awarding him the office of consul six years in the future, in the meantime granting proconsular powers and the extra-legal title “Prince of the Youth of Rome” (*princeps iuventutis*, A. 12.41). And, as if to legitimize these premature measures, “a donative was also given to the soldiery in Nero's name, and a gratuity was presented to the city populace” (*additum nomine eius donativum militi, congiarium plebei*, A. 12.41). Eight years later (59 CE), when Nero killed his mother in a jealous attempt to consolidate power, he heaped several posthumous charges on her head. Implicit in the listing of these charges is the idea that *donativa* were the proper reward for *sacramenta*:

quod consortium imperii iuraturasque in feminae verba praetorias cohortis idemque dedecus senatus et populi speravisset, ac postquam frustra habita sit,

⁹⁰ For a similar usage of the adjective in Tacitus, cf. 3.86.

⁹¹ Cf. A. 13.18, 31. Nero, prone to generous acts himself, does not tolerate *largitio* in others: A. 15.35, 44, 48; 16.19.

infensa militi patribusque et plebi dissuasisset donativum et congiarium periculaque viris inlustribus struxisset. (A. 14.11)

[He charged] that she had hoped for partnership in command; for the praetorian cohorts to swear allegiance to a female; and for the same dishonor on the part of the senate and people; and after she had been thwarted, in her hostility to the soldiery, fathers, and plebs, she had deprecated the donative and gratuity and contrived dangers for illustrious men. (trans. Woodman (2004))⁹²

The way in which the relationship between the *sacramentum* and *donativum* is embedded within a larger point about Agrippina's anger, suggests that that relationship had become deeply ingrained in society. Again, the fact that the relationship is not remarked upon is itself noteworthy.

If we accept the picture presented by Tacitus and Suetonius that the *donativum* and *sacramentum* became inextricably linked, then it is easy to see how institutions would undergo a transformation. As J.B. Campbell puts it, "the payment to the troops at the start of the reign became now virtually an obligation, not a gift, and tied the emperor more closely to the support of the army."⁹³ Any Augustan-era illusion that the *sacramentum* was a spontaneous expression of grassroots support must finally have dissipated when Claudius decided to buy that oath wholesale (Suet. *Cl.* 10.4).

Peter Herrmann opines that, relative to the Julio-Claudian era, the oaths of the *Historiae* are quite lacking in meaningful or authentic expressions of loyalty.⁹⁴ Yet I would caution against too neatly drawing such a distinction between the two works. Instead, I would argue that Tacitus'

⁹² The grip of the *sacramentum* to Nero weakens as a result of the murder; cf. A. 15.67.

⁹³ Campbell (1984) 187-88: "The regular association of the donative with imperial accession and the introduction of intended heirs, and its use in times of political crisis to cement the loyalty of the army, inevitably focused attention on this aspect of bribing the soldiers for political support." See also Stäcker (2003) 369-70: "Die Ausschüttung von Donativen durch den Kaiser beruhte grundsätzlich auf Freiwilligkeit, doch schon von dem Prinzipat des Tiberius an wurde zumindest das Donativ aus Anlass des Herrschaftsantritts zu einer derart festen Einrichtung, daß sich ein Princeps dieser kaum entziehen konnte."

⁹⁴ Herrmann (1968) 112.

rendering of the Julio-Claudian era contains within it some of the explanations as to why Tacitus had presented a *sacramentum* in crisis in his earlier large-scale work. Rather than view a neat dichotomy between the sincerer oaths of the *Annals* and the cheaper ones of the *Histories*, we ought to see the problems with the *sacramentum* in the *Histories* as in a continuum with, and emanating from, the Julio-Claudian accession narratives of the *Annals*. When Tacitus' Tiberius inherited Augustus' relationship with the army, he essentially sought to preserve that institution. But when Claudius took power under extraordinary circumstances and at the army's mercy, it is not hard to understand how the balance of power between emperor and soldier would be significantly and permanently altered. In a very real sense, then, the situation which Galba inherits upon *his* accession is distinctly Julio-Claudian.

PART 3: The *sacramentum* and the Rupture of 69 CE

ANNALISTIC HISTORIES

*initium mihi operis Servius Galba iterum Titus Vinus consules erunt. (H. 1.1.1)*⁹⁵

Criticizing Tacitus for beginning his work at the start of a consular year can be traced back well into the nineteenth century.⁹⁶ Many have claimed that Tacitus would have been better served to have begun with, say, the death of Nero in June 68, or with the accession of Vespasian in July 69.⁹⁷ Ronald Syme was, to my knowledge, the first champion of a 1 January opening, defending

⁹⁵ Cf. *Dialogus* 17.3: *illum Galbae et Othonis et Vitellii longum et unum annum* ("that one long year that saw Galba, Otho, and Vitellius"). Tacitus introduces the only other year in the extant *Histories*, 70 CE, thusly: *interea Vespasianus iterum ac Titus consulatum absentes interunt* ("Meanwhile, Vespasian once again and Titus entered into the consulship in absentia," 4.38.1).

⁹⁶ See Mommsen (1870) 228, Hirschfeld (1890) 363, Seeck (1901) 227, Courbaud (1918) 33, all cited by Syme (1958) 145n5.

⁹⁷ Hainsworth (1964) suggests that Tacitus sidestepped 68 CE entirely in order to avoid the still-sensitive issue of Verginius Rufus. Chilver (1979) 33-34 opines that starting the *Histories* on 1 July 69 with the proclamation of

it as “vital and inevitable,” since “that day starts the action on the Rhine.”⁹⁸ Yet this sort of reasoning, as laudatory as it was intended to be, robs Tacitus of all authorial discretion. Had the historiographer wanted to frame his work differently, he certainly had the skill and presumably had the freedom to do so. Even more fundamentally, the *selection* of a starting point is a fundamental task of any historian, for every history has to begin somewhere.⁹⁹ Thus, the question ought not to be: when *should* Tacitus have started his narrative? Rather, we must ask: *why* did Tacitus *decide* to start when he did, and what does that say about how we interpret book 1 and the work as a whole?

Within the last generation, the structure of the extant *Histories* has come to be viewed as an expression of Tacitus’ flexible, highly-literary adaptation of annalistic historiography.¹⁰⁰ The

Vespasian “would have produced a monstrosity,” yet still finds fault with the decision to start on 1 Jan. 69, rather than with Nero’s death in June 68, arguing that “T[acitus] was faced with difficult problems of adjustment when he selected a starting point only a fortnight before Galba’s death.” Cf. Chilver (1957) 29. Feeney (2007) 191 also believes that starting in 68 would have been preferable.

⁹⁸ Syme (1958) 145: “Where else should the work begin with? If at the death of Nero, much that preceded Nero’s death would have to go in, namely Vindex, Verginius, and the proclamation of Galba, with a vast military and political imbroglio. On the other hand, the official date of the accession of Vespasian (1 July 69) was no good at all—it truncated the story of the Rhine and Danubian armies and two invasions of Italy in a single year.”

⁹⁹ Cf. White (1973/2014) 5-7 on the distinction between “historical stories” and “chronicles”: “Chronicles are, strictly speaking, open-ended. In principle they have no *inaugurations*; they simply ‘begin’ when the chronicler starts recording events. ... Stories, however, have a discernible form... The historian arranges the events in the chronicle into a hierarchy of significance by assigning events different functions as story elements in such a way as to disclose the formal coherence of a whole set of events considered as a comprehensible process with a discernible beginning, middle, and end” (6).

¹⁰⁰ Some examples: Damon (2003) 77: “The first chapter of the *Histories* is a masterpiece of indirection. ... [Tacitus’] affiliation to the annalistic tradition is directly declared (1.1n. *consules*), but even here the message is oblique: the annalistic framework, with its presumption of the significance of the republican yearly cycle, is in constant tension with the imperial and dynastic realities of the period.” Pagán (2006): “Like any good annalistic history, the first sentence of the *Histories* states the names of the eponymous consuls who took office on January 1, 69.” Joseph (2012) 37: “Starting with the *Histories* on January 1, 69, with the assumption of the consulship by Galba and Vinius, seems to place Tacitus’ work in the tradition of Republican annalistic historiography.” Despite this realization, most scholarship on Tacitus’ relationship with the annalistic tradition has unsurprisingly been focused on the *Annals* (cf. *annales nostros*, A. 16.16). Yet, as tempting as it is to place the *Annals* within an annalistic tradition, Tacitus’ precise relationship with the annalists is unclear, seeing as he never cites any of them, ancient or more contemporary, by name (Gowing (2009) 18-21). But Tacitus does leave crumbs. In *Annals* 4, Tacitus famously apologizes that “my annals” (*annales nostros*) constitute an *in arto et inglorious labor* compared with the annalists of old (*qui vetere populi Romani res composuere*), since they contain relatively little of what makes the Republican annalistic chroniclers exciting, namely battles and military action (A. 4.32.1). Interpretations differ: Woodman (1998) 131 thinks that the implicit apology is genuine, and refers specifically to the fact that A. 4-16 is markedly less bellicose than A. 1-3; *inglorius*, in his view, is not ironic, and may express anxiety about a perceived inability to achieve the same sort of *gloria* Sallust sought (cf. *Sal. Cat.* 1.1-4, 2.9); cf. Levene (2009b). However, Marincola

recognition that sophisticated and stylizing historiographers such as Tacitus engage and adapt traditional annalistic models can be traced back to Judith Ginsburg's seminal study of the structure of the *Annals*. On Tacitus' approach to the beginnings of years, she writes: "Tacitus is simply not usually interested in the inauguration of the magistrates as a temporal event at the beginning of the narrative year, or, in fact, in consular activities."¹⁰¹ Rather, she argues, he tends to focalize the start of the year through an event of thematic relevance. One example, discussed by Ginsburg, will suffice. 24 CE is ushered in by the typical announcement, in ablative absolute, of that year's consuls (*Cornelio Cethego Visellio Varrone consulibus*, A. 4.17.1). But that bare introduction serves as mere prelude to that year's *thematic* opening. For Tacitus comments that when the pontiffs and priests offered the expected "vows for the emperor's safety" (*pro incolumitate principis vota*, A. 4.17.1),¹⁰² they commended Germanicus' young sons, Nero and Drusus, to the gods as well.¹⁰³ By mentioning these two boys, Tacitus has introduced a central theme of 24 CE (and many of the years of Tiberius' reign): Tiberius' jealousy of the House of Germanicus. From the ceremonial vows, the historian deftly pivots to Tiberius' fear that the senate's decision to favor the boys sprang from the influence of Agrippina and her faction (A. 4.17.2). A broader narrative of imperial paranoia and senatorial prosecutions continues to spiral outward from there. Thus, Tacitus' invocation of the *vota* of 3 January exists solely and precisely

(1997) 251 argues that *inglorius* is disingenuous: the lack of opportunity for easy historiographical glory afforded by the subject matter makes his *Annals* that much more impressive, and thus deserving of glory. More recently, Sailor (2008) 263: "[W]hile by lamenting the inferiority of his material Tacitus may seem from one perspective to rank *Annals* below its Republican competition, from another he elevates it above the vain game of glory-seeking and situates it instead in the realm of serious business." Joseph (2012) sees a connection between T's *nobis in arto et ingloriosus labor* and Vergil's opening of *Georgics* 4 (*in tenui labor; at tenuis non gloria*). The intertext "activates" for the reader the notion that there *is* glory to be found.

¹⁰¹ Ginsburg (1981) 14.

¹⁰² Ginsburg (1981) 19n18 notes that this vow took place on 3 January; cf. Gai. *Dig.* 50.16.233 and Suet. *Tib.* 54.1. Whether this oath constitutes a *sacramentum* is not entirely clear, but if Cass. Dio 57.24.1 is to be trusted, the *vota* Tacitus likely has in mind were those sworn to Tiberius after 10 years in power in order to renew his status; cf. Koestermann (1965) 83.

¹⁰³ Ginsburg (1981) 23; for a rundown of some of Tacitus' favorite year-introducing topics and themes in the Tiberian hexad, see pp. 10-30.

to serve a higher narrative purpose. As Ginsburg observes, this particular ceremony “will never again engage the historian’s attention. He is not interested in it for its own sake; in the year in question it takes on thematic significance.”¹⁰⁴

What Ginsburg discovered about the beginning of the year in the *Annals* has relevance for the *Histories* as well. It is true, as we saw above, that the book begins with a relatively colorless naming of the consuls of 69. Scholars have argued (rightly) that the consular introduction constitutes one small part of the larger attempt at self-justification and framing found in the preface (1.1.1-3).¹⁰⁵ Yet that is not the full picture. There are no fewer than two additional moments of annual inaugurations in the book, both of which filter the year’s opening through the *sacramentum* motif. Let us examine both passages within their surrounding contexts. It will be noted that the first passage below begins with a restatement of the consular year (1.11.3) after a long digressive survey on the state of Rome in 68 CE (1.4.1-11.2).¹⁰⁶ Only this time, it takes on a more menacing tone, preparing us for the mutiny and oath-breaking in the very next sentence:

hic fuit rerum Romanarum status, cum Servius Galba iterum Titus Vinus consules inchoavere annum sibi ultimum, rei publicae prope supremum. [12.1] paucis post kalendas Ianuarias diebus Pompei Propinqui procuratoris e Belgica litterae adferuntur, superioris Germaniae legiones rupta sacramenti reverentia imperatorem alium flagitare et senatui ac populo Romano arbitrium eligendi permittere, quo seditio mollius acciperetur. [2] maturavit ea res consilium Galbae iam pridem de adoptione secum et cum proximis agitantis. (1.11.3-12.2)

This was the state of Roman affairs, when consuls Servius Galba (for the second time) and Titus Vinus a year that was their last, and nearly the state’s last. [12.1] A few days after the kalends of January, word was sent from Belgium by the procurator Pompeius Propinquus that the legions of Upper Germany had broken

¹⁰⁴ Ginsburg (1981) 23. Tacitus frames many other beginnings of years in the *Annals* to similar thematic purpose.

¹⁰⁵ See, most notably, Marincola (1999) and the recent, thorough discussion by Sailor (2008) 119-82.

¹⁰⁶ Pagán (2006) 200-1 aptly observes that, with the future tense *erunt* (1.1.1), “Tacitus announces that he is about to digress before beginning the work proper, as if to say, ‘By the time I get around to the beginning of this work, Galba and Vinus will be consuls’ (200). ... *Iterum* [1.11.3] indeed: this is the second mention of Galba’s second consulship. The sense of repetition is inescapable (201).” For analysis of Tacitus’ digressive survey, see Damon (2003) 98-100.

their respect for the oath of allegiance in demanding a new emperor, and that, in order that their mutiny be treated more leniently, they were entrusting the authority of choosing [a replacement] to the senate and people of Rome. [2] This event accelerated Galba's plan, which he had been working on for some time now in his own mind and with his closest advisers, to adopt a successor.

inferioris tamen Germaniae legiones sollemni kalendarum Ianuariaturn sacramento pro Galba adactae, multa cunctatione et raris primorum ordinum vocibus, ceteri silentio, proximi cuiusque audaciam exspectantes, insita mortalibus natura propere sequi quae piget inchoare. ... [3] at in superiore exercitu quarta ac duoetvicensima legiones isdem hibernis tendentes ipso kalendarum Ianuariaturn die dirumpunt imagines Galbae. ... [4] ac ne reverentiam imperii exuere viderentur, senatus populoque Romani oblitterata iam nomina sacramento advocabant. (1.55.1, 3-4)

Yet the legions of Lower Germany were compelled to taken the solemn kalends-of-January oath to Galba, though with considerable hesitation. There was a smattering of voices in the front ranks; the rest were silent, everyone looking to those around them for boldness: it is ingrained in human nature to follow eagerly, while shrinking from making a beginning. ... [3] But, in the army of Upper Germany, the Fourth and Twenty-Second legions, sharing the same winter quarters, on the very same day, the kalends of January, smashed Galba's portraits. ... [4] And lest they seem to be casting off their respect for authority, they called upon in oath the names—already then in disuse—of "Senate and the People of Rome."

In the first passage, Tacitus announces the German legions' refusal to swear an oath to Galba (1.12.1). Then, changing gears, he introduces a long, unbroken sequence of unrest at Rome, ending eventually in Otho's coup and Galba's beheading (1.12.2-43.2). In the second passage, Tacitus returns to the same Germans and the same would-be oath. Only this time Tacitus fills in considerably more detail, as he proceeds to relate how the refusal to swear the oath leads to the imperial acclamation of Vitellius, and from there to Valens and Caecina marching unruly armies from the German provinces into Italy (1.55-70). Thus, twice in *Histories* 1, Tacitus invokes the same unfulfilled, disrupted *sacramentum* in order to begin spinning a narrative of betrayal, mutiny, and civil violence. The Year of Four Emperors was, therefore, in a very real sense triggered by a broken oath.

The prominent treatment of oaths in the *Histories* has not gone unnoticed, though scholars tend to believe that the annalistic structure of the work *naturally* lends itself to rituals of inauguration. This is not dissimilar from Syme's notions of the inevitability of 1 January 69 as a start-date.¹⁰⁷ J.B. Campbell, for instance, in an otherwise worthy discussion of the military oath throughout Roman history, implies that Tacitus' focus on the *sacramentum* was a documentary function of the realities of that year's events.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Peter Herrmann treats Tacitus' frequent invocation of oaths if they were an inevitable or expected part of the narrative: "[The oath] is a fixed accompaniment, indeed requirement for each elevation, of each change of rule, and of each taking of a partisan stance in the changing constellations of this year...."¹⁰⁹ On a historical level, Campbell and Herrmann are probably right. But such views underestimate the ability of any ancient historian—especially one as clever as Tacitus—to construct meaning via repetition of motif and language, and to mold inherited records of the past into a unique narrative. Oaths were indeed, so far as we can gather, sworn at the start of every year, and at the start of every new rule.¹¹⁰ But there is usually no reason to mention them; their very constancy and predictability render it unnecessary. However, in 69 CE, Tacitus *chooses* to emphasize an unfulfilled *sacramentum* because its unfulfillment perfectly represents a major theme of the extant *Histories*: the repeated rending and realignment of military (and political) loyalties.

¹⁰⁷ See p. 40 above.

¹⁰⁸ Campbell (1984) 25: "Since the *sacramentum* mentioned the name of the reigning emperor, *a priori* each new emperor would be obliged to exact the oath anew at his accession. This was all the more desirable if that accession was accompanied by violence and civil war. There is much evidence in Tacitus' account in the *Histories* of the civil wars in 68-9, where he frequently refers to the swearing in of soldiers."

¹⁰⁹ Translation is mine. Herrmann (1968) 111: "[Der Eid] wird zu einer festen Begleiterscheinung, ja Voraussetzung jeder Erhebung, jedes Herrschaftswechsels und jeder Parteinahme in den wechselnden Konstellationen dieses Jahres...."

¹¹⁰ See p. 29n69 above.

In the following two sections, I argue that the rupture of Roman society into large-scale, multi-front civil war, which Tacitus frames in terms of broken and unfulfilled *sacramenta* (1.12, 1.55), is the direct result of Galba's decision to violate the *sacramentum-donativum* contract that had developed over the course of the Julio-Claudian period. In CONFLICT AT HOME, I argue that the rise of Otho is the direct result of the soldiers in the city seeking a restoration of the “*sacramentum-donativum* contract” that Galba violated by refusing to pay the praetorian guard and urban cohort the donative they had been promised. In CONFLICT IN PROVINCIAL GERMANY, I argue that the legions also expected a donative, and that Galba's stinginess is thus a serious factor in the eventual rise of Vitellius.

Before turning to these sections, the relationship between the *Annals* and *Histories* must be briefly addressed. My argument above (PART 2) regarding the Julio-Claudian *sacramentum-donativum* contract centered around Tacitus' apparent recognition and perhaps even promotion of that concept. Obviously, the *Annals*, which were written approximately ten years *after* the *Histories*, did not serve as a *source* for Tacitus' 69 CE narrative. Rather, I would suggest that both works, taken together, reveal a historian preoccupied for years with the *sacramentum* and the *donativum* as historical, cultural, and literary forces.

CONFLICT AT HOME

The conflict between oaths and their proper reward starts near the beginning of Tacitus' survey of the political and military landscape the Long Year (1.4-11). After stating the aims of this survey (1.4.2-3), Tacitus relates early signs of trouble for the new emperor Galba (1.5). In order to preserve its full context, I have reproduced the chapter in full:

miles urbanus longo Caesarum sacramento imbutus et ad destituendum Neronem arte magis et impulsu quam suo ingenio traductus, postquam neque dari donativom

sub nomine Galbae promissum neque magnis meritis ac praemiis eundem in pace quem in bello locum praeveniamque gratiam intellegit apud principem a legionibus factum, pronus ad novas res scelere insuper Nymphidii Sabini praefecti imperium sibi molientis agitur. [2] et Nymphidius quidem in ipso conatu oppressus, sed quamvis capite defectionis ablato manebat plerisque militum conscientia, nec deerant sermones senium atque avaritiam Galbae increpantium. laudata olim et militari fama celebrata severitas eius angebat asperantes veterem disciplinam atque ita quattuordecim annis a Nerone adsuefactos, ut haud minus vitia principum amarent quam olim virtutes verebantur. accessit Galbae vox pro re publica honesta, ipsi anceps, legi a se militem, non emi; nec enim ad hanc formam cetera erant. (H. 1.5.1-2)

The city's soldiers—steeped in a longstanding oath-relationship to the Caesars and led to desert Nero more by cunning and pressure than by its own character—learned that the donative promised to them under Galba's name would not be given; that the same opportunity for great services and rewards would not be available to them in peacetime as it had been in war; and that, under an emperor who had been created by the legions, they would not be favored. Susceptible as the soldiers were to revolt, they were further agitated by the wickedness of the prefect Nymphidius Sabinus, who was scheming to become emperor. [2] Indeed, Nymphidius was stopped in the very act, but, even though the head of the mutiny had been removed, many of the soldiers had a guilty conscience. There was no shortage of people who spoke disparagingly of Galba's old age and stinginess. His severity, formerly praised and celebrated among soldiers, distressed those who scorned ancient discipline and had grown so accustomed to the last 14 years under Nero that they loved the vices of emperors no less than they used to fear their virtues. Another factor was Galba's quip that he conscripts soldiers rather than purchases them—a credit to the state but personally pernicious, since the rest of his life did not conform to this standard.

The many events, moods and political maneuvers of 68 CE described in this chapter are told essentially from the perspective of a disaffected soldiery. The soldiers, feeling scorned and taken for granted, have come to understand (*intellegit*) that the donative, which they clearly expect to receive, is not forthcoming from an emperor with a public persona (*vox*) that proudly trumpets such an old-fashioned (*pro Republica*) outlook on the subject (*legi a se militem, non emi*).¹¹¹ Interestingly, we do not know, based on this account alone, whether Galba ever actually approved such a donative or whether he ever actually planned to pay it. Tacitus even disguises with a passive verb (*promissum*) the identity of the man who promised the donative in the first

¹¹¹ This epigram also appears at Suet. *Gal.* 16.1, Plut. *G.* 18.2, and Cass. Dio 64.3.3.

place, emphasizing instead that the oath was pledged “in the emperor’s name” (*sub nomine Galbae*).

In his parallel account in the *Galba*, Plutarch spends four chapters (*G.* 8-9, 13-14) detailing the involvement and culpability of Nymphidius Sabinus, whose unfulfillable promise explicitly leads to the destruction of Nero and then of Galba.¹¹² By emphasizing the impossibility of fulfilling Nymphidius’ promise, Plutarch shifts the blame off of Galba and positions the prefect as the primary villain. Tacitus, by contrast, presents the prefect’s influence as “over and above” (*insuper*) the more fundamental anxieties provoked (a) by the absent donative, in which Nymphidius plays no explicit part, (b) by diminished opportunity for self-enrichment in peacetime, and (c) by anxieties over favoritism. Tacitus does acknowledge Nymphidius’ role briefly in the middle of the passage above,¹¹³ but then immediately refocuses attention on Galba’s reputation for old-fashioned morals and miserliness,¹¹⁴ a recurring theme throughout book 1.¹¹⁵ For Tacitus, then, the new emperor’s failure to make good on the promise is a much graver mistake than making the promise in the first place. Galba, in other words, not Nymphidius Sabinus, is the man on Tacitus’ hook.

Each of the first six words of the passage above—*miles urbanus longo Caesarum sacramento imbutus*—carries weight. By now it is hopefully clear that the historian’s use of the term *sacramentum*, at the very moment we learn that Galba will not be paying the *donativum*

¹¹² Cf. Damon (2003) 104: “...T[acitus] reduces his story to a minimum: he sought supreme power and failed. Plutarch, by contrast, allots four substantial chapters (*G.* 8-9, 13-14).”

¹¹³ He does return, however, to Nymphidius again at 1.6.1.

¹¹⁴ The old-fashioned morals of Galba were clearly an essential part of the broader historiographical tradition. The pithy epigram which Tacitus relates, *legi a se militem, non emi* (“that he conscripted soldiers, he did not buy them,” 1.5.2), finds close parallel in Plut. *G.* 18.2, Suet. *Gal.* 16.1, and Cass. Dio 64.3.3.

¹¹⁵ Tacitus returns, for instance, to the common soldiers’ dissatisfaction with the lack of donative when Galba announces his intention to adopt Piso on 10 January 69: *constat potuisse conciliari animos quantulacumque parci senis liberalitate* (“There is general agreement that they could have been won over by a tiny act of generosity from the stingy old emperor,” 1.18.3).

promised in his name, is no coincidence. Elsewhere in the Tacitean corpus when *imbutus* is used to describe a condition of allegiance or loyalty, the historian opts for the ablative *favore* instead.¹¹⁶ Here, *sacramento* pointedly invokes the ritual act which created that condition of loyalty in the first place.¹¹⁷ But, as we are soon told, Galba never adequately paid for that oath (*neque dari donativom sub nomine Galbae promissum*). In other words, he is in breach of the *sacramentum-donativum* contract. The stacked modifiers *longo*, *Caesarum*, and *imbutus* all together express the ideas of longevity and stability.¹¹⁸ The plural *Caesarum* in this context certainly refers to the Julio-Claudians as a group, under whom the *sacramentum* ritual was adapted from its earlier Republican form and had been institutionalized for generations. Thus, Tacitus emphasizes (a) the antiquity of the bond between emperor and soldier stretching back to Augustus, and, consequently, (b) the seriousness of that bond's disruption. The *miles urbanus* is situated within a broader historical and cultural framework that speaks to fundamental questions of how loyalty between emperors and armies has traditionally been constructed.

But what is the *miles urbanus*? The term is not a technical one, nor is its precise meaning readily obvious. Yet Tacitus gives us enough information to deduce their identity. Just above, Tacitus uses the same term (*urbanum militem*, 1.4.2) in clear contrast with the *patres* and the urban *populus* on the one hand, and with the *legiones* and *duces* in the provinces on the other.

This leaves only the praetorian guard and the urban cohort. Thus, the *miles urbanus* of 1.5.1 must

¹¹⁶ Cf. 2.85.1; A. 15.59.4. The various forms of *imbuo* (*OLD* s.v. 2) used by in the Tacitean corpus primarily express either a commitment to learning (*omni eruditione*, D. 2.2; *elementis studiorum*, D. 19.5; *grammatica musica geometria*, D. 13.7; *domestica disciplina*, D. 34.1; *incorrupta eloquentia*, D. 34.4; *bonis artibus*, A. 15.45.2) or a commitment to violence, often internecine (*sanguine*, 1.83.4; *civili praeda*, 3.15; *licentia*, 3.49; *caede nobili*, 4.42; *licentia saevitiaque*, 4.72; *caede*, A. 1.18.3; *praeda*, A. 1.36.1; *discordiis*, A. 11.16.2; *armis civilibus aut domesticis discordiis*, A. 13.4.1).

¹¹⁷ This oath presumably occurred around the time Galba was proclaimed emperor by the praetorian guard, likely upon his arrival in Italy. Murison (1993) 27-30 offers 20 September 68 as a *terminus post quem* for Galba's arrival in Rome, and estimates that arrival was likely in late October of that year.

¹¹⁸ Cf. 1.16.2: *Nero, quem longa Caesarum serie...* ("Nero, whom, after a long sequence of Caesars...").

refer generically to both of these resident armies. According to Cynthia Damon, “the undifferentiated reference...reflects reality, since the two corps, though under the command of the praetorian and urban prefects respectively, lived together in the *castra praetoria* in Rome.”¹¹⁹

Such concerns may seem pedantic, but are in fact vitally important for understanding the plot-progression of *Histories* 1. Our ability to identify these soldiers in precision allows us to track their movements throughout the narrative just as an ancient reader no doubt could have. As we shall see throughout the rest of this section, the men whom Tacitus calls the *miles urbanus*, and whose long commitment to the *sacramentum* Galba refuses to honor with a *donativum*, are the very members of the praetorian guard and urban cohort who turn Otho into the second emperor of 69 CE.¹²⁰

Otho knows how to exploit the disaffection of the *miles urbanus*. Even before the coup begins to materialize, the ostentatiously generous Otho “hands out a tip of 100 sesterces to each and every member of the urban cohort on duty” (*cohorti excubias agenti viritim centenorum nummos divideret*, 1.24.1). Otho entrusts the planning of the revolt’s early stages to a non-military man, a freedman named Onomastus. Onomastus’ first order of business is to bribe various praetorians and cohort auxiliaries—first the “bodyguards” (*speculatores*), then “members of the company” (*manipulares*), and even into the “higher ranks” (*primores militum*, 1.25.1-2).¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Damon (2003) 101: “In *H. T*[acitus] uses *miles urbanus* of praetorian and urban cohorts together (1.5.1, 1.14.1, 2.19.1, 2.94.1), of the urban cohorts alone (89.2, 3.69.1), and in contexts where the Praetorians alone seem relevant (2.19.1); he differentiates the urbans from the praetorians at 1.20.3, 1.74.3, 1.87.1, 1.89.2, 2.21.4, 2.93.2.”

¹²⁰ On the Othonian coup generally, see esp. Morgan (1993a), Ash (1999) 23-36 and Keitel (2006) 228-29.

¹²¹ *Speculatores* were special adjutants under the emperors: see Suet. *Cal.* 44, *Aug.* 74, *Cl.* 35, *Gal.* 18, *Otho* 5; cf. Tac. *H.* 2.73. Chilver (1979) 86: “Under the Principate there were still *speculatores* in the provinces, apparently ten to each legion...but the most important unit was one used close to the *princeps* in Rome. ... This unit was considered part of the praetorian guard...” For the ongoing role of the *speculatores* in the coup, see 1.24.2, 27.2, 33.1, 35.2. *manipulares* and *primores militum* are probably not technical terms (Chilver), though certainly refer to members of the urban cohort and praetorian guard (Suet. *Otho* 5.2).

Only then, once these members of the *miles urbanus* are on board, does the “rot” (*tabes*) spread to the legions, as they too join the cause (1.26.1).¹²²

Otho’s lobbying efforts with the disaffected *miles urbanus* pay off: as the anti-Galba movement continues to mature, a gathering of twenty-three *speculatores* proclaim Otho emperor (1.27.5). Galba’s regime, apparently recognizing that things have gotten out of hand, now renews the donative’s offering. Piso, Galba’s recently adopted heir and surrogate, closes a pleading speech to the soldiery from the Palace steps thus: “You will receive the same donative from us for loyalty as you would from others for villainy” (*a nobis donativom ob fidem quam ab aliis pro facinore accipietis*, 1.30.3). Piso’s pitch, which smacks of desperation to prevent *sedition* rather than an earnest attempt to restore *fides*,¹²³ receives mixed, but in no way enthusiastic reviews: “though the bodyguards slipped away, the rest of the cohort did not spurn the assembly’s speaker” (*dilapsis speculatoribus cetera cohors non aspernata contionantem*, 1.31.1). Yet Galba’s tribunes fail to capitalize on Piso’s speech and win back anyone’s loyalty in the praetorian barracks (1.31.2-3). Apparently, Galba’s decision not to give a donative in the first place is, for the soldiers, a bell you cannot unring. On the eve of Galba’s murder, when Otho’s support among the praetorian guard and urban cohort has reached one-hundred percent (*haud dubiae iam in castris omnium mentes*, “the minds of everyone in the camps were doubtless made up,” 1.36.1), a “flock of common soldiers” (*gregarius miles*) lifts Otho onto a platform and pledges him their allegiance (1.36).

The phrase *miles urbanus* (1.5.1), it turns out, is deliberately inclusive. Because of its inclusivity, we can trace a direct line of causality from Galba’s initial failure to honor the

¹²² On mutiny as disease in Tacitus, see Manolaraki (2003) 68-93, Woodman (2006) and Woodman (2012) 162-80. On the role of the legions in Otho’s coup, see the following section.

¹²³ Cf. Damon (2003) 162, who notes that the offer is made “in terms too vague to be effective for long.”

sacramentum-donativum contract (1.5.1); to the rise of Galba's more generous challenger, Otho (1.24.31); and finally to the enthusiastic oaths taken in Otho's name (1.36-38). This *sacramentum* scene (1.36-38), to which we turn now, merits particular consideration as both the terminus of this narrative arc (1.5-38) and as an attempt by the aggrieved soldiers themselves to address its root cause. Tacitus sets the scene vividly (1.36.1): Otho's fierce supporters place him on a platform, using their bodies as a physical buffer between their chosen leader and the officers hostile to the coup. We are told that, where Otho now stands, a golden statue of Galba has just recently been removed (1.36.1). Such imagery of succession is blunt.¹²⁴ Next, the self-empowered and passionate *miles urbanus* take it upon themselves to resurrect the emperor-soldier relationship:

strepere cuncta clamoribus et tumultu et exhortatione mutua, non tamquam in populo ac plebe variis segni adulatione vocibus, sed ut quemque adfluentium militum ad adspexerant, prensare manibus, complecti armis, conlocare iuxta, praeire sacramentum, modo imperatorem militibus, modo milites imperatori commendare. [3] nec deerat Otho protendens manus adorare volgum, iacere oscula, et omnia serviliter pro dominatione. (1.36.2-3)

Everything resounded with shouts, common, and mutual encouragement—not, as if among their people and plebs, with the changeable cries of aimless adulation,¹²⁵ but rather, whenever they noticed someone coming toward them, they grasped his hands, embraced his arms, drew him close, and dictated the oath of allegiance, talking up the [*sc. new*] emperor to the soldiers and the soldiers to the emperor. [3] Nor did Otho fail to stretch forth his hands, pay respect to the crowd, throwing kisses and doing everything with servility rather than with dominance.

Tacitus describes Otho's passive role in this episode as slavish (*serviliter*). *praeo*, an exceedingly strange verb for soldiers rather than commanders to be the subject of, connotes an intense level of religious fervor, and speaks to the soldiers' enthusiasm.¹²⁶ The *miles urbanus*, by taking matters into their own hands and instructing *one another* to take the *sacramentum*,

¹²⁴ Cf. 3.13 and the discussion in Ch. 2, pp. 78-84.

¹²⁵ The elegant phrase borrowed from Damon (2003) 175.

¹²⁶ Damon (2003) 176. The significance of *praeo* in oaths will be discussed more fully in Ch. 2, pp. 64-66.

collectively assume a dominant and active role surpassing even the (allegedly) voluntary *sacramentum* of Augustus' rise in 32 BCE (Aug. *Anc.* 25). Damon correctly observes that "the soldiers were now acting the commander's part."¹²⁷ But, somewhat paradoxically, they take control of the situation not so that they might *exceed* their station, but rather so that they might *resume* their station as it existed before the disruption of the *sacramentum-donativum* contract. "Imbued" as they are with the "long-term tradition of swearing oaths to the Caesars" (1.5.1), it makes perfect sense that they would actively and voluntarily revert to the oath once imperial generosity is restored. And it is not a stretch to say that, in a very real sense, the soldiers of Rome orchestrate not only a restoration of a Julio-Claudian-era relationship, but a return to Nero himself. Otho was, after all, a product of the Neronian court. And, in fact, much of Otho's initial success in syphoning off supporters from Galba derived from his resemblance to Nero.¹²⁸

Understanding fully what has won him his support, Otho is sure to touch on the miserliness of the Galbans when he delivers a speech to the newly-sworn-in crowd of supporters. After emphasizing the greed of Galba's supporters, the freedman Icelus and consul Titus Vinius¹²⁹ relative to Nero's freedmen Polyclitus, Vatinius, and Aegialus, Otho asserts: "Nowadays, Galba keeps us in subjugation as though we were his property and holds us cheap as if the property of another. One of his houses would cover the cost of the donative which you were never given and which is the source of daily recriminations" (*nunc et subiectos nos habuit tamquam suos et viles ut alienos. Una illa domus sufficit donativo, quod vobis numquam datur et cotidie exprobratur*, 1.37.5). Thus, Otho brilliantly argues that Galba's unneeded stinginess in fact constitutes a devaluation (*viles*) of the soldiers themselves.

¹²⁷ Damon (2003) 176.

¹²⁸ Cf. 1.13.3-4, 22.1-2.

¹²⁹ T. Vinius was, along with Galba, the consul of 69; cf. 1.1.1, 11.3. Tacitus relates that he and Cornelius Laco dominated Galba throughout his short reign; cf. 1.6.1.

That such sentiments appeal to the soldiers suggests that, while Tacitus' soldiers may not want to feel oppressed (*nunc et subiectos nos habuit tamquam suos*), they *do* crave a reciprocal relationship with their emperor (*viles ut alienos*). In that sense, mutiny, revolt, and disobedience may at times function as little more than expressions of discontent in the absence of appropriate reciprocity. Later in book 3, soldiers' hatred of feeling "cheap" (*vilis*) recurs in a similar context. When the Vitellian turncoat Caecina fails—in fact, never even attempts—to lead his loyal legions in an oath to Vespasian (3.13.1), those legions employ the language of commerce to decry being commoditized and undervalued: *integros incruentosque, Flavianis quoque partibus viles, quid dicturos reposcentibus aut prospera aut adversa?* ("What are we, healthy and unbloodied though we are, supposed to tell the Flavians, who will hold us cheap, when they demand to see our balance sheet of wins and losses?").¹³⁰ Furthermore, the prominence of the adjective *vilis* at the ends of chapters deepens the motif's scope. For instance, at the very end of book 1, when Otho delivers another, much hollower speech than the one at 1.37-38, the audience responds with servile flattery. Tacitus has a bleak diagnosis: *vile iam decus publicum* ("the dignity of the state was now held cheap," 1.90.1). Again, at the end of book 2, as Bassus and

¹³⁰ The translation is my own, though the phrase "demand to see the balance sheet" is from Wellesley (1972) 96, who explains "*repscere* literally = 'to demand payment of a debt, or the account of a sum entrusted'." Indeed, *OLD* s.v. *reposco* 2b "to demand an account" claims *H.* 3.13. The soldiers' entire collectivized speech is replete with economic terms and metaphors (underlined): *huc cecidisse Germanici exercitus gloriam ut sine proelio, sine vulnere vinctas manus et capta traderent arma? quas enim ex diverso legiones? nempe victas; et abesse unicum Othoniani exercitus robur, primanos quartadecimanosque, quos tamen isdem illis campis fuderint straverintque. ut tot armatorum milia, velut grex venalium, exuli Antonio donum darentur? octo nimirum legiones unius classis accessionem fore. id Basso, id Caecinae visum, postquam domos hortos opes principi abstulerint, etiam militem auferre. integros incruentosque, Flavianis quoque partibus viles, quid dicturos reposcentibus aut prospera aut adversa?" ("Has the glory of the German army fallen so low that we should surrender our weapons into captivity and our hands bound, without so much as a battle or a wound to show for it? What sort of legions do they have in the other camp? Defeated ones! The Othonian army's only source of strength, the men of First and Twenty-Fourth Legions, are gone. In any case, we scattered and laid low those men on the very same fields. All this, so that thousands of armed soldiers be given as a gift to that exile Antonius Primus like a herd of slaves? I'm sure eight legions *would* be a nice addition to a single fleet! That is what Bassus wanted, it is what Caecina wanted, after they robbed the emperor of his villas, gardens and money: to rob him of his army, too! What are we, healthy and unbloodied though we are, supposed to tell the Flavians, who will hold us cheap, when they demand to see our balance sheet of wins and losses?" 3.13.2-3).*

Caecina plot to betray Vitellius, Tacitus links the betrayal of Galba to the cheapening of the concept of loyalty itself: *prodito Galba vilem mox fidem* (“loyalty was soon held cheap after they betrayed Galba,” 2.101).¹³¹

CONFLICT IN PROVINCIAL GERMANY

Students of Roman Imperial history and the succession of emperors, going back to at least the biographer Suetonius, have naturally thought of Otho as preceding Vitellius—which he of course did, in terms of reign order. However, Tacitus’ format (literary annalistic history, as opposed to biography) allows him to approach the events from another perspective—namely, that *both* Otho *and* Vitellius, virtually simultaneously and independent of one another, capitalized on the same discontent which the lack of a Galban donative caused. In the previous section, we saw that Otho and the *miles urbanus*, provoked by Otho’s many bribes, pioneered a workable *domestic* solution to the betrayals of the Galban regime.¹³² In this section, we will explore Tacitus’ strategies for linking the conflict in Germany to that urban narrative.

To whom was the donative mentioned at 1.5.1 promised? Tacitus names only the *miles urbanus*. This term, as we have seen, must encompass all the common soldiers of Rome’s permanent military presence, and nothing more. Yet non-urban military personnel attached themselves to Otho’s coup as well. Tacitus records in his survey of 68 CE that, after Galba arrived in Rome, the city was crowded with an unfamiliar army—namely, the Seventh (Galban)

¹³¹ For the identification of the parameters and nature of this section, as well as an excellent analysis of its contents, see Damon (2003) 98-100. Keitel (2006) 226-36 had shown extensively that the motif of *fides* marks Galba’s relationship with his *amici*, such that Galba is, in many ways, an upstanding leader surrounded by disloyal servants: “Tacitus attributes to Galba a genuine *cura rei publicae* in choosing Piso over Otho (1.13.2). . . . “But while Galba rails against the poison of self-interest, the adoption scene is encircled by passages describing the low motives of his advisors (as we have seen), of the general public, and of senators” (226-27). Cf. Shotter (1991) 3324, cited by Keitel: “*cura rei publicae* is a term of wider application than *fides*: indeed *fides* in most cases is to be subsumed into it.”

¹³² Equitable, that is, for the time being: cf. 1.80-85.

Legion and another legion full of recent conscripts from the naval fleet (6.2). As Otho's coup gained momentum, some legionaries, apparently members of the Seventh Legion, got caught up in it (1.26.1).¹³³ Later, at Otho's acclamation, it was the naval legion's acceptance of the oath (*sacramentum eius accepit*) that made Otho believe in his own strength (1.36.3). While we might easily understand the participation of these non-urban legions to have stemmed from peer pressure or the like, might we also understand that the empire's many legionaries were expecting a donative as well, and were dissatisfied with Galba when it was not forthcoming?

According to our other sources for these events, they certainly were, on both counts. Though Cassius Dio mentions only the discontentment of the praetorian guard (64.3), Suetonius quite explicitly connects the Vitellian challenge in the German provinces to the absence of a Galban donative:

atque eo quidem nomine omnis, qui ubique erant, exacerbavit. ... sed maxime fremebat superioris Germaniae exercitus fraudari se praemis navatae adversus Gallos et Vindicem operae. ergo primi obsequium rumpere ausi Kal. Ian. adigi sacramento nisi in nomen senatus recusarunt. (Suet. *Gal.* 16.2)

Thus the troops became exasperated against him in all quarters. ... But most of all, the army in Upper Germany was incensed against him, as being defrauded of the rewards due to them for the service they had rendered in the insurrection of the Gauls under Vindex. They were, therefore, the first who ventured to break into open mutiny, refusing upon the kalends of January to take any oath of allegiance, except to the senate.

Plutarch, though less explicit than Suetonius, certainly supports such a narrative:

οἱ δὲ πρότερον ὑπὸ Οὐεργινίῳ γενομένοι, τότε δὲ ὄντες ὑπὸ Φλάκκῳ περὶ Γερμανίαν, μεγάλων μὲν ἀξιοῦντες αὐτοὺς διὰ τὴν μάχην ἣν ἐμαχέσαντο πρὸς Οὐϊνδικὰ, μηδενὸς δὲ τυγχάνοντες, ἀπαρηγόρητοι τοῖς ἄρχουσιν ἦσαν. (Plut. *G.* 18.3)

But the army which had formerly served under Verginius, and was now serving under Flaccus in Germany, thinking themselves deserving of great rewards on account of the battle they had fought against Vindex, and getting nothing, could not be appeased by their officers. (trans. Perrin (1926))

¹³³ Scholars doubt whether the Galban legion was still in Rome during Galba's coup; see Damon (2003) 109.

As we saw in the previous section, Tacitus introduces the Vitellian uprising twice (1.12.1, 55.1). Donatives play no *explicit* role in either passage. Yet, as we saw earlier in this chapter, Tacitus implicitly links the uprising in the north (1.12, 55.1-3) to events in Rome (1.5) by repetitively re-inaugurating the consular year around the same motif (oaths). Since the praetorian oath was wrapped up in grievances over donatives, it stands to reason that the provincial oath was as well.

Tacitus further heightens the connection between the German and Roman oaths through the carefully worded phrase *rupta sacramenti reverentia* (1.12.1).¹³⁴ Damon notes that these three words constitute an adaptation of the more common *rumpere foedus*.¹³⁵ She adds, insightfully, that “by applying *rupta* instead to the abstract noun *reverentia*, T[acitus] refers the particular act of breaking an oath to a more general ethical collapse.”¹³⁶ By the same token, the difference between Tacitus’ *rupta sacramenti reverentia* and Suetonius’ *obsequium rumpere* in the same historical context (Suet. *Gal.* 16) is that Tacitus takes the longer view: whereas *obsequium* denotes the soldiers’ obedience to a particular emperor (in this case Galba), *sacramenti reverentia* denotes both current allegiance *and* the tradition of swearing allegiance to

¹³⁴ During the Second Punic War (206 BCE), P. Cornelius Scipio calls into question how to address one particular batch of mutineers: “As ‘soldier?’ You, who have rejected my command and the auspices, you who have broken the sanctity of the oath?” (*An milites? qui imperium auspiciumque abnuistis, sacramenti religionem rupistis*, Liv. 28.27.4). *OLD* s.v. *reverentia* 1b “a feeling of restraint in the presence of a superior, etc., awe, deference, respect, etc.” is attested 19 times in the Tacitean corpus. The vast majority of its attestations in Latin occur between 50-150 CE.

¹³⁵ For *rumpere foedus* in Latin epic, see Vessey (1974) 28. The Roman mind seems to have linked the concept of *foedus* with that of *fides*: *accipe daque fidem foedusque feri bene firmum* (“...” Enn. *Ann.* 32 Skutsch). Aeneas, whom Dido famously calls *perfide* (“treacherous,” Verg. *A.* 4.336) denies having married Dido thusly: *nec coniugis umquam / praetendi taedas aut haec in foedera veni* (“...” Verg. *A.* 4.337-39; cf. 112). For discussion of this connection, see Hellegouarc’h (1972) 23-40 and Samuels (2014) 481-82.

¹³⁶ Damon (2003) 126 further observes: “*reverentia* functions as a kind of ethical brake, blocking actions that an individual or group is otherwise eager for: *reverentia matris* keeps Nero from indulging in passions (*A.* 14.13.2), *reverentia ducis* keeps the Vitellians from changing sides (*H.* 3.41.2), *reverentia foederis* keeps the Parthian king Vologaeses from avenging a Roman insult (*A.* 15.1.1)”

all emperors since Augustus.¹³⁷ Tacitus' decision to express the beginning of the Vitellian challenge from the perspective of an abstract crisis links the German legions' mutiny quite closely with the earlier, Julio-Claudian minded formulation: *miles urbanus longo Caesarum sacramento imbutus* (1.5.1). Thus, both Rome's *miles urbanus* and Germany's provincial legionaries tap into the oath-crisis in its broadest sense. Tacitus means for the *sacramentum-donativum* contract to apply to the German legions as well.

The rippling effect—geographically and diachronically—of Galba's stinginess is largely a subject for my discussions of the Vitellians, Flavians, and Batavians in chapters 2-4. Yet some early effects are alluded to already in the sweeping survey of the entire Mediterranean world of 68 CE (1.4-11). In this survey, Tacitus sums up the mood and military condition of every region and province of relevance. He concludes by issuing a dire warning of things to come: "the unarmed provinces and especially Italy itself, vulnerable as they were to enslavement at anyone's hand, were about to turn into the spoils of war" (*inermes provinciae atque ipsa in primis Italia, cuicumque servitio exposita, in pretium belli cessurae erant* 1.11.3). This ominous statement introduces a theme that will command the reader's attention as the plot of 69 CE advances: soldiers and armies seeking to enrich themselves through violence perpetrated against the more vulnerable members of the Roman world. Indeed, Chapter 3 explores how the reduction of fellow Romans into payable war-time commodities will become a key method by which generals purchase and maintain the loyalty and discipline of their armies. It is no coincidence that this prescient prediction *immediately* precedes Tacitus' first of several announcements that Galba lost

¹³⁷ Plutarch's account, while not interested in oaths or reverence per se, shares with Tacitus an explicit concern for the bid picture: ὥσπερ οὐ Γάλβαν, ἀλλ' ὅλως ἄρχοντα καὶ τὸ ἄρχεσθαι φεύγοντες ("It is as though we were averse, not to Galba, but to all rule and obedience," G. 22.4; trans. Damon (2003)).

the loyalty of the German legions (1.12). Nor is it a coincidence that, when the Vitellian narrative of violence and plunder begins in earnest, Tacitus re-states an even fuller version of oath-related chaos and disillusionment (1.55). In both cases, Tacitus is prompting a connection to be drawn: unending death and plunder in Germany, Gaul, and northern Italy of books 1-4 can all be traced back to Galba and a failure to honor the *sacramentum-donativum* contract.

Conclusion

In the foregoing discussion, I examined the oath-scenes of early January 69 from several overlapping perspectives: (1) as the focal point of a lexical nexus Tacitus creates between *sacramentum*, *sedition*, and *fides* in order to highlight their interconnectedness; (2) as an aspect of Tacitus' career-long interest in the function of accession oaths, manifested later in *Annals* 1.7-8; (3) as an inaugural moment of substantial thematic significance in the *Histories*' annalistically structured narrative; (4) as the beginning of a *sacramentum-donativum* crisis that promises to outlive Galba; and (5) as the common denominator of the principates of both Otho and Vitellius. By staking out these positions, I hope to have demonstrated that oaths constitute a fundamental component of Tacitean historiography.

Also in the foregoing discussion, I made the case that Galba's decision not to pay the promised donative ought to be seen against a Julio-Claudian backdrop, whereon successive *principes* had allowed the *sacramentum* to become increasingly commoditized. Galba's failure to keep either the principate or his life ultimately stem from a failure to respect recently developed customs regarding the realities of how loyalties are acquired in a post-Augustan world. This Julio-Claudian backdrop, and Galba's troubled relationship with it, helps us understand why Tacitus ultimately decided to begin his narrative on 1 January 69. The Roman world did not

fundamentally change when Nero committed suicide. After all, in the post-Neronian (but pre-*Histories*) world of 68 CE, donatives were still being granted as usual. It was only when the soldiers of the empire, legions and praetorians alike, were faced with the prospect of swearing allegiance to a man stingier than any in recent memory that the true period of tumult and uncertainty—and with it Tacitus' story—began.

As we shall see in Chapters 2-4, Galba's failure to live in his own times initiates a period of unrest and disorder in the Roman world. This breakdown transcends inter-personal and inter-factional conflict: it realigns the expectations of soldiers such that the wealth of entire cities can barely sate their desires, and gives rise to a new faction in the East better adapted to the times.

Chapter 2

The Success of the Flavian *sacramenta*

What accounts for the Flavians' successes and ultimate victory in the civil wars of 69 CE?¹³⁸

One answer, Tacitus tells us directly and repeatedly, is a healthy share of *fortuna* ("luck," "good fortune").¹³⁹ Even before the Flavian challenge begins, Vespasian (2.74.2)¹⁴⁰ and Mucianus (2.76.1) state that a successful challenge of Vitellian authority will be subject to fortune's approval. After Vespasian's acclamation (2.73-86), the centrality of luck in Flavian affairs continues unabated throughout book 3,¹⁴¹ as the Flavians win significant victories at the Second Battle of Cremona (3.23.3) and the Campus Martius (3.82.3).¹⁴² However, such a simple explanation of cause, when offered up by an intellect as active as Tacitus', ought to alert the reader to look for further, less-explicit argumentation. So what other attributes, beyond mere chance, might have aided the Flavians?

This chapter argues that the Flavian leadership, Vespasian and his right-hand man Mucianus in particular, demonstrate a strong aptitude and willingness to administer the *sacramentum* in order to realign, solidify and expand the loyalties of the armies of the Eastern

¹³⁸ For a lengthy and in-depth discussion of who constituted the "Flavian party" (*partes Flaviana*), see Nicols (1978) esp. 86-174.

¹³⁹ For Vespasian's relationship to *fortuna*, see, e.g., Scott (1968) 70-84, Kajanto (1981) 502-58, Nicols (1978) 132, Levick (1999) 67, Griffin (2000) 2, Davies (2004) 172-75. For the difference between *fortuna* and *fatum*, see Levene (1993). On the fate (*fatum*) driving Vespasian's successes, see especially Davies (2004) 211-221.

¹⁴⁰ *Et prout velint, plus minusve sumi ex fortuna* (2.74.2); Ash (2007) 288 provides a simultaneously idiomatic and literal translation of this difficult passage: "'and just as people wish, they can advance more boldly or cautiously, depending on how they fare' (lit. 'more or less of the way can be taken, according to fortune')."

¹⁴¹ For the importance of *fortuna* to the Flavian rise to power, cf. 2.1.12, 82.2; 3.2.4, 5.2, 9.5, 17.2, 18.1, 18.2, 32.3, 59.2, 60.2, 64.1, 79.2. For Vitellian lack of *fortuna*, cf. 2.97.1. For both Vespasian (1.10.3; 2.1.2, 80.2, 81.3; 3.43.1, 46.3, 49.1) and Vitellius (1.62.2, 68.1, 77.1), Tacitus uses *fortuna* to denote imperial power itself; see Damon (2003) 123. For *fortuna* as monetary fortune, see 2.84.2 (Mucianus), 2.86.4 (soldiers).

¹⁴² See also 2.7.1.

Mediterranean. The successful inauguration of the Flavian challenge does not merely *coincide with* a series of oaths sworn to Vespasian; rather, the oaths themselves, as orchestrated by the Flavian leadership, *contribute to* and in large measure *create* the marked stability and scope of the *partes Flavianae*. After having secured the loyalty of their soldiers through well-executed oaths, Vespasian and Mucianus follow a moderate path with regard to donatives, neither paying an obscene amount nor foregoing the custom entirely. Thus, they sidestep the faults of recent emperors—from Claudius to Otho—and make an important first gesture toward restabilizing Roman military society.

Furthermore, as we shall see, Tacitus draws attention to the great skill and intelligence of the Flavians in the matter of oaths by highlighting the Vitellians' relative ineptitude and ignorance. According to Cynthia Damon, one way to measure the difference between the Vitellians and Flavians is to examine how the two factions relate to the fundamental Roman concept of *fides* ("loyalty"): Vitellius, she observes, "seems not so much vicious as confused about this fundamental virtue, but the emperor's confusion proved fatal...."¹⁴³ Conversely, "the Flavian record on *fides* in the surviving books is presented with less moralizing, more calculation."¹⁴⁴ I would suggest that Damon's insightful observations apply also to the *sacramentum*, the precise moment of loyalty's inception. Vespasian and his associates are better at forming relationships with their armies than the Vitellians are, because they possess a vastly

¹⁴³ Damon (2006) 265.

¹⁴⁴ Damon (2006) 265 gives two examples of the Flavians' "pragmatic" attitude toward *fides*: "[1] More typical of the Flavian attitude is Mucianus' canny advice to Vespasian at the outset of their bid for power. When someone pushes you towards a risky undertaking, says Mucianus, you should ask yourself whether he is putting his own safety at risk (2.76.1: *ipse qui suadet considerandus est, adiciatne consilio periculum suum*). A simple profession of *fides*, it is implied, will not suffice. Mucianus is at this very point urging an extremely risky undertaking on Vespasian, and the narrative, as we will see below, gives plentiful evidence of his having linked his fate to Vespasian's. [2] This pragmatic form of *fides* is also demonstrated by Antonius Primus, who, after urging the commanders of the Danube legions to move quickly against Vitellius rather than wait for Mucianus and the legions of the east, says that he himself will put the plan into effect: *idem suasor auctorque consilii ero* (3.2.4: 'I will both urge and carry out the plan'). Like Mucianus, he follows through."

greater understanding of the importance of the *sacramentum* and how to administer it to their advantage.

PART 1: The Inauguration of the Flavian Challenge

THE VITELLIANS DO NOT UNDERSTAND SACRAMENTA

The extended acclamation sequence of Vespasian in the East (2.73-81) reveals a stark contrast between the savviness of the Flavians and the ignorance and incompetence of the Vitellians in matters of commander-soldier relations. This contrast hinges primarily on Tacitus' use of the *sacramentum* as a transitional device between two narrative panels, wherein the same pivotal scene of oath-swearing in the East is told from a Vitellian perspective at the end (2.73) of a long Vitellian panel (2.57-73), and then told again from a Flavian perspective at the beginning (2.74) of a subsequent Flavian section of the narrative (2.74-86).

The Vitellian panel mainly consists of Vitellius' lugubrious march to Rome, fresh off his victory against Otho. The panel ends when "scouts from Syria and Judaea reported that the East had been administered an oath to [Vitellius]" (*speculatores e Syria Iudaeaque adactum in verba eius Orientem nuntiavere*, 2.73). Vitellius responds to the apparent fealty with "haughtiness" (*superbia*) and "complacency" (*socordia*). Tacitus elaborates:

tum ipse exercitusque, ut nullo aemulo, saevitia libidine raptu in externos mores proruperant. (2.73)

[Vitellius] himself and his army, as though without rival, erupted into patterns of behavior more associated with foreigners and marked by savagery, debauchery and plundering."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Trans. Wellesley (2009).

In hindsight, Vitellius' recklessness and credulity is "almost unbelievable" (*vix credibile memoratu*, 2.73), for the emperor had heard about Vespasian and the potential threat he posed (2.73). Tacitus thus infuses this first exchange between the Flavians and Vitellians with a pointed contrast. The new emperor, who has just arrived at the capital of his empire, ought to be the Roman in this scenario. However, by ignoring the external threat and thus failing to possess constructive *metus hostilis*, Vitellius has marked himself as someone in a state of moral decline.¹⁴⁶ Vespasian, the future emperor and dynasty founder on the periphery of the empire to whom Tacitus shifts in the very next sentence, already possesses the potential to be the better Roman simply by default.

The Flavian panel (2.74-86) now begins by backtracking a few weeks earlier to describe what *actually* happened with the oath that was reported to Vitellius in the foregoing chapter (2.73). This time, the oath is focalized through Vespasian and his legions:

at Vespasianus bellum armaque et procul vel iuxta sitas viris circumspectabat. Miles ipsi adeo paratus ut praeuntem sacramentum et fausta Vitellio omnia precantem per silentium audierint. (2.74.1)

But Vespasian, however, considered carefully the prospect of war, arms and forces positioned both near and far. His own soldiers were so prepared to follow him that they listened to him in silence as he led them in an oath of allegiance to Vitellius and prayed that all the emperor's affairs be well-omened.

Vitellius' scouts were right about one thing: this passage makes absolutely clear that the oath was in fact, as they reported, "administered" (*adactum*, 2.73) by Vespasian. But in every other respect, Tacitus reveals that Vitellius' *socordia* and *superbia* were misplaced.

A deeper explanation of the vocabulary of oath-scenes is in order. It was standard practice for the commander first to take the oath himself, and then to administer it to his

¹⁴⁶ For a clear expression of the concept and phrase, cf. Sal. *Jug.* 41.2 with Lintott (1972) 627 and Levene (2000) 178-80. Cf. also Sal. *Hist.* 1.12 (*metus Punicus*).

underlings.¹⁴⁷ Quite often, however, Tacitus' (and others') descriptions of *sacramenta* omit the commander's own personal oath, while compressing the commander's directives to his army into a neat, idiomatic phrase: *in verba adigere* (literally: "to compel someone [acc.] to say words of allegiance to someone [gen.]").¹⁴⁸ In many cases, the soldiers' assent and participation in the oath as administered is left unstated but can easily be inferred from context.¹⁴⁹ However, in cases where assent is *not* implied, as at 2.74.1, formulations such as *iurare* ("to swear") or *dicere sacramentum* ("to say the oath"), with the swearer as subject, and/or *silentium*, all may be employed to indicate that the oath has or has not been acceded to.¹⁵⁰ Such formulations commonly either downplay or outright negate top-down administration. An episode in Livy elucidates the essential semantic distinction between *iurare* (vel sim.) and *in verba adigere* (vel

¹⁴⁷ For a fuller description of the oath "fanning out" from the higher to the lower ranks—and, in this case, from Rome to the provinces—see the oaths of allegiance sworn to Tiberius at the start of his reign (A. 1.7.2), and to Germanicus during the German revolt (A. 1.34.1), with Goodyear (1972) 254. Pliny also provides a clear description of a similar non-military scenario: *stabant candidati ante curulem principis ut ipse ante consulis steterat, adigebanturque in verba in quae paulo ante ipse iuraverat princeps, qui tantum putat esse in iure iurando, ut illud et ab aliis exigat* ("The candidates stood before the prince's chair, as he previously stood himself before the consul's, and were directed to take the oath in the same words as their prince had recently used—for he believes the act of swearing so important that he expects everyone to do as he did," Plin. *Pan.* 77.2; trans. Radice).

¹⁴⁸ For examples of this phrase, see *TLL* i/678.72-693.23. The use of *adigo* in oath-phrases abounds in Tacitus' major works and in the *Histories* especially. Tacitus quite often includes the recipient of the oath in the genitive: 2.14, 2.80, 3.13, 3.43.1, 4.21.1, 4.59.3, 4.61, 4.70.5; A. 1.34.1; cf. Suet. *Ves.* 6.3. Sometimes, though less commonly, the precise type of oath being sworn (i.e., *ius iurandum*, *sacramentum*) is supplied: 1.76.2; 2.55.1, 79; 3.58.2; A. 1.37.1; cf. Caes. *BC* 1.76.3, 2.18.5.

¹⁴⁹ An example occurs in this very section of *Histories* 2, when Tiberius Alexander administers an oath to his Egyptian legions (2.79.1). Similarly, the success of Vespasian's and Mucianus' dutiful efforts on Otho's behalf in early 69 is implied: *Iudaicum exercitum Vespasianus, Syriae legiones Mucianus sacramento Othonis adigere* ("Vespasian administered the loyalty oath to the Judean army, Mucianus to the legions of Syria," 1.76.2). For the implied success of *adigere* outside of Tacitus, cf., e.g., Caes. *BC* 1.76.3 and Liv. 4.5.2. Livy describes an ancient past when questioning an oath, once administered (*cum sacramento adacti sint*), had not yet even been considered (Liv 3.20.4-5).

¹⁵⁰ This was evident in some of the oaths we saw in the previous chapter; cf. *iuravit in mea verba tota Italia sponte sua* ("All of Italy, of its own accord swore an oath in my name," Aug. *Anc.* 25); *iurare in nomen suum passus est* ("Claudius allowed them to swear an oath to him," Suet. *Cl.* 10.4). For *iurare* vel sim. in the *Histories* to express the oath-taker's own agency, cf. 1.56.2, 76.1; 2.16, 79, 80.1-2 (see pp. 73-76 below); 4.59.2. For the combination of *sacramentum dixit* and *silentium* to express reluctance, cf. 4.31.2 discussed at Ch. 4, pp. 166-68. In the case of Aquitania's defection to Vitellius soon after Otho's accession, it appears that the issue is one of simple mutiny, rather than refusal of administered oaths: *ne Aquitania quidem, quamquam ab Iulio Cordo in verba Othonis obstricta, diu mansit. Nusquam fides aut amor* ("Not even Aquitania stayed long, though they had bound by oath to Otho. Nowhere was there either loyalty or affection," 1.76.1). For this sense of *obstringere* (*OLD* s.v. 4 "to bind"), cf. 1.54.3; A. 1.14.

sim.) perfectly: Titus Manlius Torquatus physically assaults his father's enemy, the tribune Marcus Pomponius, in the latter's home. In the course of the attack, Manlius threatens that "unless [Pomponius] swears in the words [Manlius] himself dictates" (*nisi in quae ipse concepisset verba iuraret*, 7.5.5), he, Manlius, would stab him to death. So Pomponius, afraid for his life, "swore the oath he was administered, and afterwards publicly declared that he had been compelled by force to relinquish his undertaking," (*adiurat in quae adactus est verba; et, prae se deinde tulit ea vi subactum se incepto destitisse*, Liv. 7.5.6).¹⁵¹ The two iterations of *adigere*—*adactus est* and *vi subactum*—hint at the gradations of coercion the verb might convey: *adactus est* is best defined as "was administered" (*OLD* s.v. 9b), whereas the stronger *vi subactum* more closely approximates *adigere* as "to cause a person to take an oath" (*OLD* s.v. 9a). Often, "to compel" or even "to force" is more accurate.¹⁵² These distinctions are subtle, but vital, for they get at the nature of the relationship between administrator and administrated. In any given oath passage, context may be required to discern precisely the degree of forcefulness conveyed by *adigere*—i.e., does it mean "administer" to a willing audience or "force" an oath against one's will? In either case, one thing is always clear: *in verba adigere* denotes the will of the commander, not the soldier.¹⁵³

Vespasian's legions make even less of a show of accepting what was administered than Pomponius did: the silence (*silentium*, 2.74.1) of the *miles* indicates not acceptance under duress, but flat-out refusal. The verb *praeo*, used in imperial Latin for dictating all manner of oaths and

¹⁵¹ Trans. adapted from Foster (1924).

¹⁵² The *OLD* does not seem to recognize that the more forceful idea of "compelling" might be present in *adigere* in an oath context.

¹⁵³ This "rule" no longer holds when *adigere* takes a reflexive object, with soldiers as subject. Cf., e.g., *legiones...se ipsae in verba Vespasiani adigunt* ("the legions voluntarily take the oath of allegiance to Vespasian" (4.70.5), discussed in Ch. 4, p. 186.

prayers (*OLD* s.v. 3 “to dictate”),¹⁵⁴ indicates that the soldiers ought to be repeating aloud what Vespasian says.¹⁵⁵ Polybius, our best positive evidence on proper (albeit Republican) *sacramentum* procedure, confirms that the army’s vocal participation was a standard requirement.¹⁵⁶ It is evident, then, that the soldiers’ failure to voice their assent to the oath as administered constitutes defiance of the oath’s content.¹⁵⁷ That defiance does not, however, constitute a rebuke of the administrator himself, Vespasian. For Tacitus attributes the silence to the fact that the soldiers were “attached” (*paratus*) to their general.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, this peculiar mixture of disobedience and obedience results from not wanting to openly contradict someone so dear to them, even as their inner hatred of Vitellius prevents full compliance.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Cf. 1.36.2 [*sacramentum*], Plin. *Ep.* 10.96 [prayer], Plin. *Pan.* 64-65 [non-military oath]. Damon (2003) 176 remarks that the two instances of the verb in Tacitus are the only two “used of a soldier’s oath of obedience to his commander. . . Both [at 1.36.2] and at 2.74.1 T[acitus] adds the religious solemnity of *praeire* to the taking of the soldier’s oath”; cf. *recitaret* (“read out”) at 4.59.2.

¹⁵⁵ The best evidence that *praeire* necessarily entails repetition is Plin. *Pan.* 64.4, where the panegyrist praises Trajan for standing before a seated consul and taking an oath of office: *nescio iam, nescio, pulchriusne sit illud quod praeunte nullo, an hoc quod alio praeunte iurasti* (“For my part, I cannot judge which is the more splendid: the fact that you took the oath with no precedent before you, or that you took the words from another’s lips,” trans. Radice (1969)). Incidentally, Pliny’s surprise suggests that the one administering the oath ought to be superior in authority.

¹⁵⁶ Ἐπιτελεσθείσης δὲ τῆς καταγραφῆς τὸν προειρημένον τρόπον, ἀθροίσαντες τοὺς ἐπιλεγμένους οἱ προσήκοντες τῶν χιλιάρχων καθ’ ἕκαστον στρατόπεδον, καὶ λαβόντες ἐκ πάντων ἓνα τὸν ἐπιτηδεύτατον, ἐξορκίζουσιν ἢ μὴν πειθαρχήσῃ καὶ ποιήσῃ τὸ προσταττόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν ἀρχόντων κατὰ δύναμιν. οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ πάντες ὁμνύουσι καθ’ ἓνα προπορευόμενοι, τοῦτ’ αὐτὸ δηλοῦντες ὅτι ποιήσουσι πάντα καθάπερ ὁ πρῶτος (“The roll having been completed in this manner, those of the tribunes in each legion on whom this duty falls collect the newly enrolled soldiers, and picking out of the whole body a single man whom they think the most suitable make him take the oath they he will obey his officers and execute their orders as far as is in his power. The the others come forward and each in his turn takes his oath simply that he will do the same as the first man,” Polyb. 6.21.1-3; trans. Paton (2011)).

¹⁵⁷ Pace Nicols (1978) 71, who suggests that the soldiers’ silence resulted not from frustration or resentment, but from knowledge that the oath was only a prelude to Vespasian’s acclamation: “The soldiers, seemingly aware that they would not be held to this oath for long, remained silent when it was administered.” However, this interpretation is difficult to reconcile with the fact that up until this point the plans and aspirations of Vespasian, Titus, and Mucianus have been kept secret from the soldiers. Davies (2004) 203 remarks on Vespasian’s piety towards Vitellius for even attempting to administer the oath. Ash (2007) 285 suggests that the soldiers realize that Vespasian, simply going through the motions, expects silence.

¹⁵⁸ Ash (2007) 285 translates: “were so attached to him.”

¹⁵⁹ Pace Morgan (1994b) 119: “[T]he fact that Vespasian’s troops did not appreciate taking the oath of allegiance to Vitellius is no ringing endorsement of their own general; mere silence is not encouraging.”

How was it that the truth of the oath (2.74) did not translate to Vitellian action (2.73)? Given the Roman custom of the oath-taker repeating the words of the oath-giver, these scouts—presumably men who themselves at one time or another have been made to swear an oath of loyalty—ought to have recognized the aberration from normal ritual practice and reported the silence to their emperor. But, somehow, they miss the point entirely, relating only “that the East had been administered an oath of allegiance to [Vitellius]” (*adactum in verba eius Orientem*). Tacitus gives no reason to doubt that the scouts were actually present to observe the scene unfold. Their sin, then, is one of omission: “that the East had been administered an oath of allegiance” is, of course, true, but it is not the *whole* truth; the soldiers’ response, or in this case lack thereof (*silentium*), ought to have been the leading headline.

It is not particularly surprising that Vitellius would believe such an incomplete and erroneous report.¹⁶⁰ One can easily see how Tacitus’ charges of arrogance and complacency (*superbiae socordiaque*, 2.73) may easily have led to distraction and an unwillingness to ask the necessary follow-up questions. Eleni Manolaraki has shown that Vitellius exhibits a similar visual and ethical blindness toward the horrors of the Bedriacum battlefield a mere three chapters earlier (2.70). Rather than look at and interpret the carnage for himself, he relies on and accepts as true the glorifying rhetoric of his tour guides, Caecina and Valens.¹⁶¹ Thus, there is plenty of blame for the intelligence blunder to go around. A clear failure to observe and/or understand the

¹⁶⁰ On one level, Vitellius’ failures of interpretation participate in a larger Tacitean phenomenon. O’Gorman (2000) 13: “Tacitus’ reader follows the characters (sometimes the narrator) in the act of reading, not always coming to the same conclusion; the differences as well as the parallels are suggestive. In particular, Tacitus continually represents his characters in the act of *misreading*; the failure of interpretive skills seems to be a dominant feature of Tacitus’ Imperial Rome” (emphasis in original).

¹⁶¹ Manolaraki (2005) 245, 256-61: “The oversimplified and glorified version of the battle, presented to the princeps by his subordinates, lulls him into a false sense of security that proves fatal to him and his party.” For further discussion of the literary significance of 2.70, see also Keitel (1992), Morgan (1992), Woodman (1998) 70-85.

proper execution of the *sacramentum* ritual existed throughout—perhaps *everywhere* throughout—the Vitellian regime.¹⁶²

The transition from the Vitellian (2.57-73) to Flavian (2.74-86) panel exhibits a high degree of rhetorical skill on Tacitus' part. By closely juxtaposing the Vitellians' ill-informed stupidity (2.73) with the mood of discontent in the Flavian East threatening to cut Vitellius' reign short (2.74), the historian not only provides a neat transition from the Western to the Eastern theater, but also deftly suggests that the Vitellians are not equipped to handle what Vespasian and his supporters have in store for them.¹⁶³

MUCIANUS, OATH-GIVER EXTRAORDINAIRE¹⁶⁴

Unlike the clueless Vitellians, the Flavians know their way around a *sacramentum*. This distinction between the two regimes is, for Tacitus, key to understanding the means of Flavian success, as well as understanding the nature of the relationship between the Flavian soldiery and its leadership.

¹⁶² Vitellius exhibits the same sort of disinterest in the details when he hears of a rebellion against his in Africa (2.58-59). Damon (2006) 267: "In the Corsican incident [1.80-85], Otho turns a blind eye to murders done on his behalf. Tacitus reports the same reaction in Vitellius in connection with a rebellion in Africa, where the procurator appointed to Mauretania by Nero and retained by Galba and Otho, Lucceius Albinus, became restive under Vitellius and threatened to invade Spain. He was also rumored to be sporting the insignia and name of a king (2.58). Eventually, however, his followers, dismayed at the thought of facing Vitellius' German legions, have a change of heart, whereupon Albinus, three key officers, and Albinus's wife are killed (2.59.1). Vitellius heard the report and did nothing: *nihil eorum quae fierent Vitellio anquirente: brevi auditu quamvis magna transibat* ("However important events were, Vitellius accorded them but a brief hearing, inquiring into none of the things that were being done," 2.59.1). Here again, Tacitus's language—the paradoxical antithesis *brevi ... magna*—conveys his conviction that there should have been an investigation into these deaths."

¹⁶³ In order to achieve this effect, Tacitus may have tampered with received chronology. According to Ash (2007) 282, Tacitus allows an implausibly little amount of time for news of Vitellius' victory over Otho to bounce around the Mediterranean: "It is now [i.e., when news of the *sacramentum* reaches Vitellius] sometime between the battlefield visit (c. 23 May) and Vitellius' arrival in Rome (on or before 18 July). After Otho's suicide on 17 April, time was required for news (even by sea) of Vitellius' victory to reach Syria and Judea, for the provinces to react, and for agents to make the return journey to notify the emperor about the oaths. These *speculatores* arrive suspiciously quickly, and Vitellius himself should know that an imperial challenge was always possible, even if oaths had been sworn." Ginsburg (1981) *passim* has demonstrated the historian's willingness and skill at restructuring and juxtaposing events for rhetorical effect.

¹⁶⁴ For the career of Mucianus, see esp. Nicols (1978) 105-6 and Levick (1999) 53.

A close examination of the complicated acclamation process reveals that Tacitus assigns the bulk of the credit for its success to Mucianus, governor of Syria and Vespasian's key ally in the East.¹⁶⁵ Tacitus tells us in an early character sketch that "by a subtle gift for intrigue [Mucianus] exercised great influence on his subordinates, associates, and colleagues, and he was the sort of man who found it more congenial to make an emperor than to be one" (*sed apud subiectos, apud proximos, apud collegas variis inlecebris potens, et cui expeditus fuerit tradere imperium quam obtinere*, 1.10.2). And in fact, though Vespasian was a thoughtful man capable of tremendous circumspection, he needed Mucianus' confidence and vision.¹⁶⁶ This dependency is rendered dramatically when Vespasian and Mucianus, along with a select group of confidants, meet (apparently) near Mt. Carmel, on the Syria-Judaea border, to strategize and to hash out their concerns:¹⁶⁷

his pavoribus nutantem et alii legati amicique firmabant et Mucianus, post multos secretosque sermones iam et coram ita locutus... (2.76.1)

As Vespasian was faltering because of these anxieties, he was being heartened by his legates and friends, including Mucianus, who, after many private conversations, also spoke the following words in their presence...

In the long speech that follows,¹⁶⁸ Mucianus declares his impassioned support for Vespasian's cause, exhorts Vespasian to take the imperial throne for himself (*ego te, Vespasiane, ad*

¹⁶⁵ Mucianus remained Vespasian's close ally long into Vespasian's reign. He ultimately would hold the consulship three times (64, 70, and 72), a rare honor granted previously only to Marcus Agrippa and L. Vitellius, the emperor's father; see Nicols (1978) 106n47. On Mucianus' impressive literary career, see Ash (2007b).

¹⁶⁶ Tacitus circles back to make this point often in these chapters: *Vespasianus bellum armaque et procul vel iuxta sitas vires circumspectabat* ("Vespasian looked around at the war and its arms and the might situated both far and near," 2.74.1); *modo in spem erectus, aliquando adversa reputabat* ("at one point buoyed by hope, and then mulling over his problems" 2.74.2); *versabatur ante oculos Germanici exercitus robur* ("the strength of the German army turned before his eyes," 2.75.1). Cf. Levick (1999) 45: "Real hesitation on Vespasian's part, in the face of Vitellius' legionary strength, and the fear of assassination on the order of Galba or Vitellius, was natural, and it is found, most impressively, in Tacitus who contrasts the deliberation of Vespasian and his main ally, the governor of Syria, with the determination of their officers."

¹⁶⁷ Tacitus does not hint at the location of this meeting until after Mucianus' speech (2.78.3-4), and only then implies it. On the likelihood of Mt. Carmel or its environs as the spot of this meeting, see especially Nicols (1978) 71-72.

¹⁶⁸ On the speech as a whole, see Aubrion (1985) 384-90.

imperium voco, “I call you, Vespasian, to power,” 2.76.2), and unequivocally subordinates himself to the future emperor.¹⁶⁹ The speech hits home, as “the rest (*ceteri*) crowd around Vespasian,” exhorting him and invoking past omens (2.78.1).

A precise understanding of who says what to whom at the meeting is crucial for understanding the pivotal role Mucianus plays in these preliminary steps toward imperial acclamation. The only people named as present for these events are Vespasian, Mucianus, and an anonymous list of “other legates and allies” (*alii legati amicique*, 2.76.1).¹⁷⁰ *coram* (“in their presence,” *OLD* s.v. 2b), in this context, refers not to a *contio* (“general assembly”) of soldiers, but rather to a *concilium* (“meeting”) of officers. And, since *coram* is clearly the antithesis of *secretos*,¹⁷¹ the *secretos...sermones* must refer, therefore, to private, possibly even one-on-one conversations Mucianus had with Vespasian *before* he addressed the *concilium*. After the speech concludes, the other officers present at the *concilium*, again referred to as *ceteri* (“the rest [sc. of the officers besides Mucianus]”), respond extremely positively to Mucianus’ call for Vespasian to take the throne, even going so far as to cite prophecies and the movement of the stars (2.78.1). Thus, Mucianus’ decision to call Vespasian to the throne was a calculated act, planned in

¹⁶⁹ Ash (2007) 283 points out that in Jos. BJ 4.592-600 “the soldiers use some similar material while persuading themselves to intervene for Vespasian.” Nicols (1978) 115 suggests that Mucianus “was not in the position to promote his own cause even if he had wanted to do so,” as he did not command a fighting army, and could not compete with the benefits a capable son like Titus confer. Though Tacitus does concede that Vespasian’s army was the more seasoned of the two, he describes both as formidable: *tres, ut supra memoravimus, ipsi Vespasiano legiones erant, exercitae bello; quattuor Mucianus obtinebat in pace, sed aemulatio et proximi exercitus gloria depulerat segnitiam, quantumque illis roboris discrimina et labor, tantum his vigoris addiderat integra quies et inexperti belli ardor* (“Vespasian had three legions, practiced in war; Mucianus acquired four in peacetime, though competitiveness and the fame of the neighboring army had dispelled their laziness; however much strength dangerous situations and hard work had given Vespasian’s army, an uninterrupted period of repose and a passion for the first taste of war had given Mucianus’ army energy in equal measure,” 2.4.4).

¹⁷⁰ On the individual identities of *legati amicique*, see Nicols (1978) 99-113, esp. 112-13: “[T]hese men were the fathers, grandfathers and uncles of the emperors Trajan, Hadrian, Antonius Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Commodus. In this sense the leading members of the governing class for the next century and a half all traced the first prominence of their families to Vespasian’s officers in 69.”

¹⁷¹ *coram* (*OLD* s.v. 2b) “in the presence of many, publicly, openly”; cf. Chilver (1979) *ad loc.*

consultation with Vespasian, and intended to cement support among the rest of the officer class. Mucianus and Vespasian are now one step closer to their ultimate objective.

However, when the actual business of consolidating support for an imperial bid begins, it is neither Vespasian nor Mucianus who make the first move:

initium ferendi ad Vespasianum imperii Alexandriae coeptum, festinante Tiberio Alexandro, qui kalendis Iuliis sacramento eius legiones adegit. (2.79)

The first move to confer Vespasian imperial power began at Alexandria, at the speedy urging of Tiberius Alexander, who compelled his legions to swear the oath of allegiance on 1 July.¹⁷²

Tacitus provides few details and even less context for this momentous event. How exactly, for instance, does Tiberius Alexander relate to Mucianus' and Vespasian's plans? We have been told that Alexander "had made common cause" (*sociaverat consilia*, 2.74.1) with Vespasian.¹⁷³ But it is unclear whether he numbered among the *alii legati amique* at Mt. Carmel.¹⁷⁴ Further crucial information is not forthcoming either (e.g., how did the soldiers respond to the oath's administration? were they willing participants?).

Tacitus' decision to treat the Egyptian oath less as the start of a dynasty and more as an obligatory data point becomes clear in the following sentence. While the historian acknowledges the importance the 1 July oath holds as the *official* beginning of Vespasian's rise to power, he simultaneously undercuts its *actual* importance, by emphasizing another event that occurred in Judaea two days later:

isque primus principatus dies in posterum celebratus, quamvis Iudaicus exercitus V nonas Iulias apud ipsum iurasset, eo ardore, ut ne Titus quidem filius exspectaretur, Syria remeans et consiliorum inter Mucianum ac patrem nuntius. cuncta impetu militum acta non parata contione, non coniunctis legionibus. (2.79)

¹⁷² Translation adapted from Wellesley (2009).

¹⁷³ Ash (2007) 286: "the pluperfect implies that Flavians had been planning for some time (*contra* Flavian propaganda)."

¹⁷⁴ Heubner (1968) 256 assumes that Vespasian only learned of the Egyptian oath after it happened. Nicols (1978) 72 is skeptical. Cf. Ash (2007) 285, 308-9.

This date was subsequently celebrated as the first day of his principate, though on 3 July the Judaeen army had sworn the oath before Vespasian himself with such passion that they did not even wait for his son Titus, who was returning from Syria, where he acted as an intermediary between Mucianus and his father in their negotiations.¹⁷⁵

Suetonius' version of this event confirms Tacitus' remark that 1 July was held in official commemoration: *Tiberius Alexander praefectus Aegypti primus in verba Vespasiani legiones adegit Kal. Iul., qui principatus dies in posterum observatus est* ("Tiberius Alexander, prefect of Egypt, compelled his legions to swear an oath to Vespasian on 1 July, which date was subsequently observed as the first day of the principate," Suet. *Ves.* 6.3).¹⁷⁶ Obvious verbal commonalities between the Suetonian passage and *H.* 2.79 demonstrate that, on this plot point at least, Tacitus seems to have paid lip service to some version of official Flavian history. Suetonius then proceeds to state blandly that "then on 11 July the Judaeen army swore the oath before Vespasian himself (*Iudaicus deinde exercitus V. Idus Iul. apud ipsum iuravit*, Suet. *Ves.* 6.3), implying that the Judaeen oath was merely the second, and therefore less significant event in the march toward war.¹⁷⁷ Tacitus, on the other hand, downplays the 1 July oath by contrasting unfavorably its officially-recognized status (*in posterum celebratus*) with the genuine passions (*eo ardore*) of the soldiers on 3 July in Judea.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, Tacitus' rare precision in dating provides enough evidence that one event did not influence the other. As Nicols notes, if we accept Tacitus' dating, "the distance between Alexandria and Caesarea, about 500 km by sea,

¹⁷⁵ Translation adapted from Wellesley (2009).

¹⁷⁶ For a general reconstructed timeline of events in the East in the Spring and Summer of 69 CE, see especially Levick (1999) 43-64.

¹⁷⁷ While it is certainly true that Suetonius does not choose to emphasize the Judaeen oath in any way, it is also true that the lack of elaboration, even of pivotal events, is common throughout his short biographies.

¹⁷⁸ *primus principatus dies in posterum celebratus* is a reference to fact that 1 July 69 was the day Vespasian retroactively chose as his *dies imperii* and the beginning of his tribunician power, Griffin (2000) 13n40 explains: "Vespasian's *dies imperii* and his *tribunica potestas* were numbered from 1 July 69, but the latter is not attested on documents of 69 and first appears on a diploma of 7 March 70 (*ILS* 1989). On Vespasian's *dies imperii*, see also Barzanò (1980), Levick (1999) 67 and 70.

would seem to argue for independent acclamations.”¹⁷⁹ For Tacitus, the Judaeian oath represents an alternative—and preferable—moment to mark the start of the Vespasianic era.¹⁸⁰

Tacitus further bolsters the relative significance of 3 July by investing the scene with remarkable psychological detail:

dum quaeritur tempus locus, quodque in re tali difficillimum est, prima vox, dum animo spes timor, ratio casus obversantur, egressum cubiculo Vespasianum pauci milites, solito adsistent<es> ordine ut legatum salutaturi, imperatorem salutavere: tum ceteri adcurrere, Caesarem et Augustum et omnia principatus vocabula cumulare. mens a metu ad fortunam transierat: in ipso nihil tumidum, adrogans aut in rebus novis novum fuit. ut primum tantae altitudinis obfusam oculis caliginem disiecit, militariter locutus laeta omnia et adfluentia excepit (2.80.1-2).

While the right time, right place, and—the most difficult thing of all in such circumstances—the first voice was being sought, while hope and fear, reason and chance were being turned over in their minds, a few soldiers, who standing at their posts in order to give Vespasian the customary salute as legate as he emerged from his bedroom, instead saluted him as emperor. Thereupon other gathered around and heaped on him the title “Caesar” and “Augustus” and the terminology of the principate. The entire mood shifted from fear to fortune.¹⁸¹ In Vespasian himself there was no element of swollen pride, arrogance or novel behavior in the face of novel events. As soon as dizziness that had blurred his vision after such a great elevation had cleared, he spoke to them as a soldier as he received a whole torrent of congratulations. (trans. Ash (2007), adapted)

Vespasian is a soldier through and through, and responds to the legionaries’ praise as though he were one of them. That he “spoke to them as a soldier” (*militariter locutus*, 2.80.2) echoes Tacitus’ assessment of a man who “was fierce on campaign and took the lead on marches” (*acer militiae anteire agmen*, 2.5.1).¹⁸² Though no oath appears in 2.80, Tacitus tells us in the previous chapter (2.79; see above) that the Judaeian troops also swore a *sacramentum* to Vespasian on 3 July. *iurasset* implies spontaneity on the part of the legions, which is in turn corroborated by

¹⁷⁹ Nicols (1978) 72.

¹⁸⁰ Suetonius (*Ves.* 6.3) leaves a gap of ten days between the oaths, thus keeping the possibility open for a cause and effect relationship: first, the Egyptian oath on 1 July, “then” (*deinde*) the Judaeian oath on 11 July.

¹⁸¹ Here I follow Ash (2007) 311, who, after noting the difficulty over whether to construe *mens* as referring to Vespasian or his soldiers, suggests that “[i]t is perhaps best to take *mens* as the collective state of mind amongst the Flavians, including Vespasian.”

¹⁸² Ash (2007) 86 translates *acer militiae* as “every inch a soldier” or “energetic with regard to military service.”

Tacitus' characterization of the sudden salutation (*cuncta impetu militum acta non parata contione, non coniunctis legionibus*, "everything happened at the soldiers' initiative; no assembly had been convened and the legions had not been marshalled," 2.79).¹⁸³ It is evident, therefore, that Vespasian did not orchestrate anything; everything good just fell into his lap. No wonder he found the whole ordeal dizzying (*tantae altitudinis obfusam oculis caliginem*).

While Vespasian was reeling from the magnitude of what had happened in Judaea, Mucianus took full advantage of the sudden *salutatio* by administering an oath of his own in Antioch. Thus, it was Mucianus who defined the relationship between Vespasian and his enthusiastic supporters as one between an emperor and his subjects, rather than between fellow soldiers, as was Vespasian's instinct:

namque id ipsum opperiens Mucianus alacrem militem in verba Vespasiani adegit (2.80.2).

For awaiting that very thing [i.e., the soldiers' *salutatio*], Mucianus swore his eager army to allegiance with Vespasian...

Tacitus elects not to mention, as he transitions from Vespasian to Mucianus in a brief phrase (*namque id ipsum opperiens*), that Vespasian and Mucianus currently reside in two different places entirely (Caesarea and Antioch, respectively).¹⁸⁴ This omission of information creates the effect that Mucianus is "hovering" over events as they unfold. The participle *opperiens* ("awaiting") signals, moreover, a reclamation of agency from the soldiery,¹⁸⁵ while underscoring Mucianus' premeditation, planning, and overall orchestration of events.¹⁸⁶ We will recall that the verb *adigere* ("to administer an oath" *OLD* s.v. 9b), though fairly common in Tacitean and other

¹⁸³ A *salutatio* (<*saluto*, *OLD* s.v. 2) is "a formal morning call paid by a client on his patron" or "a similar call paid on the Emperor" (*OLD* s.v. 2). Obviously, the latter is meant at 2.80.1. For further salutations in Tacitus, cf. *A.* 4.60, 11.22; *D.* 9.2. For more on the Republican *salutatio*, see Hug (1920) 2060-2072, Friedländer (1922) I 228-30, Kroll (1933) II 65-68, Sumi (2005) 2-3.

¹⁸⁴ See Levick (1999) 47.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. *impetu militum* (4.79).

¹⁸⁶ Ash (2007) 312.

oath-passages, is by no means obligatory. Thus, it is reasonable to posit that its use here emphasizes Mucianus' relatively high degree of agency as the oath's administrator. His agency, however, was not of the coercive sort, for the modifier *alacrem* ("eager") clearly indicates that the soldiers did not require much prompting.

Mucianus follows up the solicitation of the *sacramentum* with an eloquent speech to the general public at the theater of Antioch (*Antiochensium theatrum*, 2.80.2), thereby widening the pool of oath-takers. By holding this *contio*, Mucianus arrogates to himself a role typically fulfilled by the emperor himself.¹⁸⁷ This does not mean that Mucianus is attempting to usurp Vespasian's incipient authority: in his long speech before the *salutatio* (2.76-78), the former unequivocally and publicly subordinates himself to the latter. Rather, Vespasian, the consummate soldier, relies upon Mucianus' eloquence in order to perform adequately and fully the tasks of the office to which he, Vespasian, aspires.

Mucianus' conscious and strategic efforts in the realms of oaths and oratory help trigger a chain reaction of support for Vespasian throughout the East. Pledges of loyalty to the emperor-to-be pour in from all over—first from the rest of Syria (*Syria omnis in eodem sacramento fuit*, "All of Syria had sworn the same oath," *H.* 2.81.1), then from every eastern province (*quidquid provinciarum adluitur mari Asia atque Achaia tenus quantumque introrsus in Pontum et Armenios patescit, iuravere*, "all the provinces along the sea as far as Asia and Achaea and everything inland toward Pontus and Armenia, swore the oath," *H.* 2.81.2). The verbs and phrases used to describe these oaths (*in eodem sacramento fuit; iuravere*) imply a lack of the top-down orchestration which usage of *adigere* (2.80.2) denotes—or, at the very least, deemphasize Mucianus' direct involvement. Through this shift in language, Tacitus insinuates that Mucianus'

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Sumi (2005) 228: "The evidence for *contiones* under Augustus, fragmentary though it is, suggests that Augustus was the predominant but not exclusive orator at public meetings."

decision to seize the moment in Antioch (2.80.2), coupled with his rhetorical abilities, have sparked a chain reaction of official expressions of loyalty to Vespasian all over the Eastern Mediterranean. This sequence of events demonstrates how important a timely, well-ministered *sacramentum* can be for the health and growth of an imperial challenge.

The value of Mucianus' skills of oath-administration is proven again in book 4, when Tacitus describes the critical role the Syrian governor played in defusing a mutiny at the praetorian camp at Rome. This mutiny narrative, though brief, has a clear structure: the chaotic civil war and consequent reshuffling of armies has created an extremely dangerous situation which threatens the stability of the Flavian regime (4.46.1); but Mucianus, by applying great skill and sensitivity to the situation unites many discontented soldiers under Vespasian (4.46.2-4).

Tacitus is laconic and direct about the stakes: *inter quae militaris seditio prope exarsit* ("meanwhile, a mutiny nearly flared up in the ranks," 4.46.1). On the one hand, several cohorts of praetorians, formerly in service to Vitellius, were demanding to be reenlisted under the new regime. On the other hand, formerly-Vitellian legionaries, who had been promised a promotion to praetorian status, were demanding that they be paid commensurate with that higher rank. Tacitus remarks that attempting to disperse the men would have led to violence, while there was not enough money to pay them all. Whoever steps in to fix this situation has his work cut out for him.

It is under these conditions that Mucianus enters the barracks, and proceeds to dissolve the mutinous passions by creating divisions along two lines. First, he strips the former Vitellians of their armor and makes them compare their rags to the Flavians' fierce array. Second, he splits up the Vitellian forces into their constituent parts by place of origin (e.g., Germany, Britain). By

thus isolating the unruly legions and thereby frightening them with thoughts of being singled out for execution, Mucianus manages to bring the disparate factions *together* under one common allegiance:

prensare commanipularium pectora, cervicibus innecti, suprema oscula petere, ne desererentur soli neu pari causa disparem fortunam paterentur; modo Mucianum, modo absentem principem, postremum caelum ac deos obtestari, donec Mucianus cunctos eiusdem sacramenti, eius<dem> imperatoris milites appellans, falso timori obviam iret; namque et victor exercitus clamore lacrimas eorum iuvabat. isque finis illa die. (4.46.3)

They hugged their comrades, hung on their necks and sought farewell kisses, saying that they ought not be left alone nor suffer a different fate in the same matter. They appealed first to Mucianus, then to the absent emperor, and finally to the gods in the sky, until Mucianus confronted their misplaced fear by calling everyone soldiers of the same allegiance (*sacramenti*) and the same emperor. For then even the victorious army allayed their tears with applause. And so the day ended.

Though the particular details and circumstances of this episode obviously differ in numerous ways from Vespasian's acclamation narrative (2.73-81), Mucianus' tactics here recall, in broad terms, those used in that earlier episode to assert control over a dangerously chaotic situation: once Mucianus is assured that the discontented legions will be well-disposed toward intervention, as their begging (*obtestari*) indicates, he responds swiftly by administering a *sacramentum* in the name of Vespasian. The repetitive language of inclusiveness (*cunctos eiusdem...eiusdem*) recalls Mucianus' earlier determination to enlist as many supporters of Vespasian as possible in the immediate aftermath of the *salutatio* in Judaea (2.80-81). And, as was the case in the eastern provinces, Mucianus is once again an independent agent, acting on the emperor's behalf (*absentem principem*) but on his own initiative.

Mucianus has succeeded in downgrading a possible mutiny into soldiers humbly "pleading for continued service and a salary" (*militiam et stipendia orant*, 4.67.4)—essentially asking to be included in the new Flavian world. Rather than hand out any punishments or

rewards *en masse*, he treats the men on an individual basis—“by which safest remedy the consensus of a crowd is diminished” (*quo tutissimo remedio consensus multitudinis extenuator*, 4.67.4)—enlisting some, while discharging others (honorably or dishonorably as the case may be). Mucianus’ ability to galvanize support while simultaneously remaining sensitive to the just desserts of each person and group is impressive, and one not possessed by every leader in the *Histories*.¹⁸⁸

THE NEGATIVE *EXEMPLUM* OF CAECINA (3.13)

With so many civil war factions and so many operators within each of them, the oath scene is a common occurrence in the *Histories*. In such scenes, Tacitus shows time and again that the success of an attempt to shift soldiers’ loyalties from one emperor or leader to another depends on the charisma and skill of the man who administers the oath. The administrator must act at the right time and place; he must say the right words to the right people. If he fails to do any or all of these things, the mercurial nature of the civil war soldiers will assert itself. One such particularly disastrous failure at the top appears in book 3 in the run-up to the Second Battle of Cremona. Close analysis of Caecina’s failure to shift his soldiers’ allegiances from Vitellius to Vespasian helps explain why Mucianus’ efforts in book 2 are so effective. Whereas Mucianus uses timely *sacramenta* to lend legitimacy and stability to a nascent Flavian faction, Caecina, a Vitellian turncoat who wants to bring his soldiers along with him as he defects to the Flavian side, fails in

¹⁸⁸ Mucianus’ sensitivity to each individual’s just desserts contrasts, for instance, with Otho’s sloppy response to the Corsican uprising (2.16). Damon (2006) 267 summarizes: “The island’s procurator, Decumius Picarius, being ill-disposed to Otho, decided to contribute Corsica’s (puny) resources to Vitellius. The islanders, fully aware of the danger posed by Otho’s nearby fleet, assassinated Picarius and his entourage while they were in the baths. The victims’ heads were taken to Otho as proof of the island’s loyalty to him. The islanders “were neither rewarded by Otho nor punished by Vitellius; in the vast cesspool of the age, they were mixed in with greater crimes” (*neque eos aut Otho praemio adfecit aut puniit Vitellius, in multa conluvie rerum maioribus flagitiis permixtos*,” 2.16.3). The editorializing appended to this narrative emphasizes the shameful fact, characteristic of the “cesspool” that was Rome under Otho and Vitellius, that criminal acts had no consequences.”

many respects and suffers dramatically for those failures. Intratextual correspondences between the two scenes prove that a mass-participation *sacramentum* is conspicuous in its absence in Caecina's camp.

With Vespasian and his many armies now bidding for power, and Lucilius Bassus, the commander of the fleet at Ravenna, already having defected to the challenger (3.12), Caecina, one of Vitellius' two top lieutenants (Valens is the other),¹⁸⁹ sees the precipitous weakening of his master's position and also attempts defection. Much like Mucianus, who convinced Vespasian to seek the throne at a small *concilium* ("meeting") surrounded by his *legati amique* ("legates and friends," 2.76.1), Caecina focuses his initial efforts of persuasion on a selective assembly of men, rather than convening a more public *contio* (3.13.1). After that, their tactics diverge: whereas Mucianus later engages common soldiers by leading them in a *sacramentum* (*Mucianus alacrem militem in verba Vespasiani adegit*, 2.80.2) and then promptly delivering a stadium-sized speech (2.80.2), Caecina leaves the majority of the common soldiers out in the cold, a slight to which they do not take kindly:

at Caecina, defectione classis volgata, primores centurionum et paucos militum, ceteris per militiae munera dispersis, secretum castrorum adfectans in principia vocat. ibi Vespasiani virtutem viresque partium extollit: transfugisse classem, in arto commeatum, adversas Gallias Hispaniasque, nihil in urbe fidum; atque omnia de Vitellio in deterius. mox incientibus qui conscii aderant, ceteros re nova attonitos in verba Vespasiani adigit; simul Vitellii imagines dereptae et missi qui Antonio nuntiarent. [2] sed ubi totis castris in fama proditio, recurrens in principia miles praescriptum Vespasiani nomen, proiectas Vitellii effigies aspexit, vastum primo silentium, mox cuncta simul erumpunt. (3.13.1-2)

But Caecina, after knowledge of the fleet's defection had been disseminated, called an elite selection of centurions and a few soldiers (the rest scattered at their duties) to a secret camp meeting at headquarters. There he extolled the virtue of Vespasian and the strength of his faction, saying that the fleet had fled, supplies were low, Gaul and Spain were hostile, and the City was completely disloyal—everything, according to him, was going worse for Vitellius. Then, as those who were in the plot took the lead in swearing allegiance to Vespasian, Caecina made the others do

¹⁸⁹ The significant role Valens plays in the *Histories* will be discussed in depth in Ch. 3, pp. 120-37.

the same¹⁹⁰ while they were still shocked by the sudden turn of events. At the same time, Vitellius' portraits were torn down and the news sent to Antonius. [2] However, the treasonable act became the talk of the entire camp, and as the men rushed back to the headquarters building they saw that Vespasian's name had been written up and Vitellius' portraits thrown down. At first, there was a great hush, then one great explosion of protest.¹⁹¹

The sentence *mox incipientibus...adigit* (3.13.1) implies some degree of planning and orchestration of events, and suggests that Caecina understood, on some level, the importance oaths play in ensuring loyalty. Caecina's fatal flaw, however, was his assumption that the soldiers would simply fall in line without their commander communicating with them. No attempt is made to persuade or manipulate the majority absent from the meeting into swearing allegiance to Vespasian. In fact, the majority of the common soldiers are not even told about the change of management; they have to find out about it when the images (*imagina*, 3.13.1; *effigies*, 3.13.2) of their beloved Vitellius have been replaced and a new name has been written above the commander's tent.¹⁹²

The soldiers' reactions to these revelations come in two stages: first silence (*primo silentium*, 3.13.2), then chaos (*mox cuncta simul erumpunt*, 3.13.2). Earlier in this chapter, we observed that Vespasian's men reacted with a sort of pregnant, menacing silence when led in an oath of allegiance to Vitellius (2.74.1).¹⁹³ The present, Vitellian silence (3.13.2) is similar, inasmuch as it also constitutes a response to an immediate military commander attempting to

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Thayer's translation: "those who were privy to the plan being the first to take [the oath]."

¹⁹¹ Translation adapted from Wellesley (2009), who, betraying his differing interpretation of *silentium* than my own, adds "menacing" before "hush."

¹⁹² On the imperial portraiture on military standards (*signa*) and its public display as function of legionary loyalty, see Campbell (1984) 96-99, and esp. von Petrikovits (1983) 192: "Several pieces of evidence show that the *sacramentum* was connected with the standards in whose presence the oath was sworn. Such a custom is attested by the representation of the *coniuratio* of the Italians in whose midst a military standard stood, and Seneca (*Ep.* 95.35), Tacitus (4.31.8) and Tertullian (*Apol.* 16.8) show the same for the Imperial Roman army." For soldiers' reverence for the standards, cf. also Jos. *BJ* 6.316 and Cass. Dio 40.18. It makes perfect sense, then, that tearing down these symbols in order to signal displeasure or revolt is a common occurrence in the *Histories*: cf. 1.36.1, 41.1, 55.2; 2.85.1; 3.12.2, 31.2. On the narrative function of military iconography in the *Histories*, see esp. Ash (1999) 58 and Manolaraki (2003) 120-22.

¹⁹³ See pp. 65-66 above.

dictate to the soldiers their higher allegiance. Beyond that, there are two ways to interpret the tone of the Vitellians' silence. First, we might view the *vastum primo silentium* as the first stage of oppositional defiance against Caecina's actions, and the ensuing tumult (*mox cuncta simul erumpunt*) as merely the next stage of that defiance; Caecina, in that case, presumably could have done little or nothing to stop the eruption. However, I advocate a second interpretation, that the *vastum primo silentium* constitutes an initial shock akin to the one felt by the men at Caecina's preliminary meeting who were "stunned by talk of revolt" (*ceteros re nova attonitos*, 3.13.1). At this small gathering, Caecina was quick to take charge of the situation: with the help of some co-conspirators (*conscii*), he led the unsure men (*attonitos*) in a new oath of allegiance (*in verba Vespasiani adigit*). But, when the common soldiers, who were not privy to the information shared at the small meeting, show similar hesitancy and shock, manifested in their silence (*silentium*), the absence of a similar attempt to administer an oath in that moment—in itself an "act of silence," if you will—reveals Caecina's leadership ability suspect.¹⁹⁴

Caecina's oath-administering efforts with the dumbstruck "elite selection of centurions and a handful of common soldiers" (*primores centurionum et paucos militum*, 3.13.1) echo Mucianus' large-scale response to the Judaeans soldiers' *salutatio* almost verbatim:

namque id ipsum opperiens Mucianus alacrem militem in verba Vespasiani adigit (2.80.2).

For awaiting that very thing [i.e., the soldiers' *salutatio*], Mucianus swore his eager army to allegiance with Vespasian

mox incientibus qui conscii aderant, ceteros re nova attonitos in verba Vespasiani adigit. (3.13.1)

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Tacitus' anxious words at the beginning of the *Agricola*: *memoriam quoque ipsam cum uoce perdidissemus, si tam in nostra potestate esset obliuisci quam tacere* ("we would have lost even memory itself along with our voice, if it were as easy to forget as it is to be silent," *Agr.* 2.3). For a recent discussion of this passage, see Haynes (2012).

Then, as those who were in the plot took the lead in swearing allegiance to Vespasian, Caecina made the others do the same,¹⁹⁵ while they were still shocked by the sudden turn of events.

Furthermore, the *legati amique* (2.76.1), whose counterparts in the Caecina narrative are the *ceteros re nova attonitos*, Tacitus also referred to as *ceteri* (2.78.1). These intratextual correspondences reinforce the sense that Caecina had a chance to perform as effectively as Mucianus, but failed. The *silentium* would have been the perfect time for Caecina to sing Vespasian's praises and hope for a groundswell of support—or at least say *something* to mollify them and thereby mitigate the imminent backlash. Caecina, however, fails to do anything of the sort, and the men of *legio V* not only refuse to follow along in his plan of defection, but denounce him as an opportunist and a traitor and clap him in irons (3.14).¹⁹⁶

While the Caecina episode clearly reinforces the importance of effectively-administered *sacramenta* in ensuring loyalty, we must also bear in mind that Mucianus' men were already dissatisfied with Vitellius, whereas Caecina's legions had no qualms with the current regime. Caecina's mistakes aside, this episode also illustrates that, in Tacitus' literary universe the oath of allegiance cannot in itself *create* loyalty or engender good will, but rather must *follow upon* already existing feelings of affection. In other words, loyalty is not manufactured; it is exploited. As we have seen, Mucianus understood this perfectly well: before the soldiers themselves have expressed any interest in throwing off the Vitellian yoke, he confines his pro-Vespasian strategizing to a small cadre of men in his own class. Then, once *one* group of common soldiers in *one* place express an authentic desire for a change in emperor, Mucianus pounces, turning a

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Thayer's translation, cited by Ash (2007) *ad loc.*: "those who were privy to the plan being the first to take [the oath]."

¹⁹⁶ Manolaraki (2003) 119-22 analyzes this episode as a "loyal mutiny": "The Vitellians' counter-mutiny indicates that they gradually seize the moral high-ground, and they prove better men than their own leaders. This is an excellent vantage point to gauge their collective portrait, but it is more than that: the episode illustrates that, in the fractured world of a civil war, a rebellion can be acceptable, and even admirable, as an attempt to restore normality" (121).

fairly spontaneous groundswell of support into a real regional movement. Mucianus' tool to effect this transition—from semi-orchestrated, “spontaneous” acclamation to the formalization of an Eastern coalition loyal to a new imperial challenger—is the *sacramentum*.

Caecina's failed defection is, for Tacitus, no idle exercise in the theoretical importance of well-administered oaths; its negative impact on the Vitellian principate is immediate and enormous. On the eve of the attempted defection, Tacitus comments that, had Caecina been loyal (*si adfuisset fides*, 3.9.2), he could have repelled the Flavian incursion into Italy.¹⁹⁷ Now, because of Caecina's oath-related failings, the leaderless Vitellian forces of northern Italy are especially vulnerable to Flavian attack. This time, it is Primus who pounces: *ubi haec comperta Antonio, discordes animis, discretos viribus hostium exercitus adgredi statuit* (“once Primus learned what had happened, he decided to attack the enemy army while their attitudes were at variance and their strength was divided,” 3.15.1). Soon, a Flavian victory at Cremona (3.26-35) would break the Vitellians' back for good.

Despite Caecina's dissatisfaction with Vitellius, his particular failings—ignorance of, and inattention to his soldiers' thoughts and needs; proclivity toward inaction—anticipate the metaphorical deafness of Vitellius after the Second Battle of Cremona.¹⁹⁸ When news of defeat reaches the Vitellian camp, Vitellius, rather than take control of the situation through communication and persuasion, forbids that anyone even discuss it (3.54.1). Later, when the situation at Rome begins to deteriorate as Primus' army closes in, Tacitus makes use of the

¹⁹⁷ After describing a mutiny on the Flavian side (3.10-11), Tacitus transitions to the “mutiny” of Caecina's legionaries with the following: *exitiosiore discordia non suspicionibus volgi, sed perfidia ducum turbabantur* (“they were wracked by even more dangerous discord—more dangerous not because of the suspicions of the mob, but because of the treachery of the generals,” 3.12.1).

¹⁹⁸ On the sensory deficiencies of Vitellius, see Woodman (1979), Morgan (1992), Haynes (2003) 71-111, Manolaraki (2005).

vocabulary of communication in order to depict the breakdown of functioning imperial authority: when those surrounding the emperor advocate leadership and action, Vitellius turns a “deaf ear to their recommendation to bravery” (*surdae ad fortia concilia aures*, 3.67.1); then, in response to the news that the legions and cohorts stationed at Narnia, north of the city, have deserted over to the Flavians, Vitellius, along with his son and other members of his household, goes out in public dressed in mourning attire. The soldiers in the city show their discontentment with his weak leadership by means of their “menacing silence” (*minaci silentio*, 3.67.2). In the end, the inert, inattentive and clueless emperor is overpowered by the literal voice of the people. When Vitellius attempts to give his dagger of *imperium* to the consul in abdication, the people roar in opposition (*reclamantibus*), whereupon an even louder shout (*maior...clamor*) forces the emperor back toward the Palatium (3.68.2-3). Such improper balance of the noise levels between ruler and subject—i.e., that Vitellius is improperly timid and the people improperly able to overpower him in turn—is mimetic of the wider breakdown of discipline and good governance. The fact that the end of Vitellius’ reign hews so closely to the failures and challenges of the traitor Caecina, provocatively presents Vitellius’ abdication as a kind of defection. Certainly, like Caecina, the emperor has let his men down. Thus Tacitus’ indictment of Vitellius is subtle but devastating: in the end the emperor is little better than his own traitorous lieutenant.

THE FLAVIAN ACCLAMATION AND THE “PARALLEL TRADITION”

Tacitus’ careful and sustained focus on the importance of the *sacramentum* lends a complexity to his acclamation narrative not found in the parallel tradition. Suetonius, for instance, makes no distinction between the *salutatio* in Judaea and Mucianus’ Syrian oath. Instead, the biographer conveys Vespasian’s rise in one generic sentence: *Iudaicus deinde exercitus V. Idus Iul. apud*

ipsum iuravit (“Thereupon the Judaeian army swore their loyalty to the man himself five days after the ides of July,” Suet. *Ves.* 6.3).¹⁹⁹ We may note also that the verb *iurare* (as opposed to *adigere*) gives the agency to the soldiers; no mention is made, therefore, of any coordinated effort on the part of the elites. Suetonius, moreover, relates Mucianus’ role in the acclamation process only in passing, blandly lumping him in with the other eastern governors and kings who, vaguely, “considerably furthered the enterprise” (*plurimum coeptis contulerunt*, *Ves.* 6.4). Josephus’ and Cassius Dio’ accounts are even more alien to Tacitus’, for these Greek historians relate only imperial acclamations. No oath ritual of any kind is ever even mentioned explicitly.²⁰⁰

To varying degrees, all three parallel accounts vest common soldiers with considerable influence over the course of events. This means a considerable diminishment of Mucianus’ role. Neither Suetonius nor Josephus mention him at all during the acclamation.²⁰¹ Cassius Dio acknowledges that the Judaeian salutation stemmed *partially* from a *perception* among the legions that Mucianus wanted Vespasian to be emperor (64.8.4). But what precisely Mucianus did to give the soldiers that impression is left unstated. After the acclamation, he vanishes altogether.²⁰²

It is the court historian and Flavian partisan Josephus who provides the fullest and most extreme “bottom-up” version of the acclamation.²⁰³ According to his account in *The Jewish War*, when Vitellius arrived in Rome, he plundered it without mercy (*BJ* 4.586-87). As a result, the Judaeian legions took it upon themselves to proclaim a reluctant Vespasian emperor:

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Ash (2007) 310.

²⁰⁰ Jos. *BJ* 4.601: ἀναγορεύουσι (“they issue a public proclamation”); Cass. Dio 64.8.4: ἀνεῖπον αὐτὸν αὐτοκράτορα (“they proclaim him emperor”).

²⁰¹ Josephus’ Mucianus does appear *BJ* 4.605, but at this point, the acclamation process has already ended.

²⁰² Cass. Dio 64.8.4 further differs from Tacitus in stating that Mucianus held on during the acclamation to the hope he would enjoy an equal share of power with Vespasian. For the Tacitean Mucianus’ willing public subordination to Vespasian, see his speech at the *concilium* of officers (2.76.1-78.1).

²⁰³ Josephus’ status as officially sanctioned Flavian historian is secure: cf. Jos. *Vit.* 363; Beard (2003) 544.

τῷ δὲ φροντὶς μὲν ἦν πάλαι περὶ τῶν ὅλων, οὔτι γε μὴν αὐτὸς ἄρχειν προήρητο, τοῖς μὲν ἔργοις ἑαυτὸν ἄξιον ἡγούμενος, προκρίνων δὲ τῶν ἐν λαμπρότητι κινδύνων τὴν ἐν ιδιωταίᾳ ἀσφάλειαν. ἀρνούμενῳ δὲ μᾶλλον οἱ ἡγεμόνες ἐπέκειντο καὶ περιχυθέντες οἱ στρατιῶται ξιφῆρεις ἀναρεῖν αὐτὸν ἠπείλουν, εἰ μὴ βούλοιτο ζῆν ἀξίως. πολλὰ δὲ πρὸς αὐτοὺς διατεινόμενος ἐξ ὧν διωθεῖτο τὴν ἀρχὴν τελευταῖον, ὥς οὐκ ἔπειθεν, εἴκει τοῖς ὀνομάσασιν. (Jos. *BJ* 4.601-4)

Their general had long been concerned for the public weal, but had never purposed his own promotion; for, though conscious that his career would justify such claim, he preferred the security of private life to the perils of illustrious station. But on his declining, the officers pressed him more insistently and the soldiers, flocking round with drawn swords, threatened him with death, if he refused to live with dignity. After forcibly representing to them his many reasons for rejecting imperial honors, finally, failing to convince them, he yielded to their call. (trans. Thackeray (1997))²⁰⁴

Scholars have generally viewed Tacitus' acclamation narrative as a corrective against the sort of pro-Flavian propaganda represented here.²⁰⁵ To make this point, they quite rightly cite Tacitus' notices that Vespasian was plotting with Mucianus to take the throne for himself already during Otho's reign (2.1-7).²⁰⁶ Long before any salutations or oaths, Vespasian and his fellow officers had taken note of the common soldiers' desire to challenge the Othonian and Vitellian factions (2.7.1) and made the conscience decision to revolt, instead "putting off military action until the time was right" (*arma in occasionem distulere*, 2.7.2).²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ The other two extant accounts, Dio Cassius and Suetonius, are of little use in corroborating Josephus due to their brevity. Cassius Dio's epitomizer preserves a greater role for Mucianus, but still vests the soldiers with the final say (64.8).

²⁰⁵ Unlike Josephus, Suet. *Ves.* 5 and Cass. Dio 65.8.3 both assert Vespasian's intentions to seize imperial power during the Otho-Vitellian conflict.

²⁰⁶ Most cogently and recently, Ash (2007) 33: "[Tacitus] uses a range of techniques to demonstrate to his readers that he is no tame Flavian puppet. The most cogent involves the arrangement of events with the narrative. So, although pro-Flavian accounts of Vespasian's rise to power judiciously post-date his challenge as the only possible response to Vitellius' 'decadent' principate (Jos. *BJ* 4.588-604), [Tacitus] makes it clear that Otho is still *princeps* when the seeds for the Flavian challenge are first planted (2.7.1)." See also Briessmann (1955); Chilver (1956) 203-4; Chilver (1957) 29-35; Townend (1961) 59; Ferrill (1965); Nicols (1978) 87-99; Chilver (1979) 162, 233; Morgan (1994b) 199n6; Ash (2007) 284, 309. Martin (1981) 92 argues that the ends of books 2 and 3 also contain jabs at Josephan propaganda. For analysis of Josephus as Flavian court historian, see esp. Beard (2003) 543-58.

²⁰⁷ According to Tacitus, Titus was the first member of the Flavian family to contemplate defecting (2.1); see Nicols (1978) 94 and Levick (1999) 44. Yet Mucianus and Vespasian, with Titus' help, had already "upon Nero's death" (*exitu...Neronis*) set aside their resentment and began working "together to their mutual benefit" (*in medium*, 2.5.2). On the (largely tendentious) belief among modern historians that Vespasian had designs on imperial power already during Nero's lifetime, see Weber (1922), Chilver (1979) 34.

Yet viewing Tacitus' account of Flavian ascent as a mere corrective against pro-Flavian propaganda is insufficient, since *Histories* 2 does not entirely refute Josephus' account of eager soldiers and a timid Vespasian. In fact, the final picture Tacitus paints is one of *revision*, not refutation. We will recall from earlier in this chapter that Tacitus pays meticulous attention to (a) the ways in which the various oaths are sworn, and (b) to the different stages of the acclamation process. Indeed, by stressing *both* the *salutatio* (which, admits Tacitus, sprang organically from the soldiers) *and* the Eastern oaths (which Mucianus orchestrated after months of plotting with Vespasian), Tacitus sidesteps a false binary: did the soldiers coerce Vespasian, or did Vespasian coerce the soldiers? Neither would be wholly accurate. Tacitus' narrative—unlike Josephus', Suetonius', or Cassius Dio's—is complex, for it portrays the process of imperial acclamation as a delicate balance of interests in all segments of military society. Whether Tacitus' account is true to events as they actually occurred can of course never be known. Nevertheless, his “all of the above” approach to agency, coupled with the sheer length and complexity of the events as narrated, lends the narrative a high degree of verisimilitude and cements it as one of the central moments of the extant *Histories*.

Part 2: A Return to Moderation

From the very beginning of the *Histories*, fairness in matters of money is a primary preoccupation of the military mind. When Galba refused to pay the soldiers the donative which was owed to them by both promise and precedent, many of his supporters turned to the more generous Otho. Now, as Vespasian and the Flavians inaugurate their challenge with the customary oaths of allegiance (2.73-81), they must decide how to address issues of compensation. Will they follow Galba's example and defiantly and proudly withhold all

monetary rewards? Galba's swift demise argues against it. Or, like Otho and Vitellius, will they honor the pre-Galban precedent of lavishing gifts on their army and effectively purchasing their loyalty? True, Otho had successfully wrested supporters away from Galba by being more generous with his money and favors. But, it is equally true that the soldiers' desire for increasingly higher compensation for their loyalty did not cease simply because Otho was in power. When a mutiny broke out in Rome at the praetorian barracks, 5,000 sesterces were offered to each man to placate them—the highest single per capita cash-for-loyalty exchange since Claudius' accession. “Only then,” remarks Tacitus, “did Otho dare enter the camp” (*tum Otho ingredi castra ausus*, 2.82.3).²⁰⁸ Vitellius failed to learn the lesson of Otho's reign. When he finally arrives in Rome, his failure to instill discipline in the *milites* and rein in their expectations for further reward, coupled with his rampant wasteful spending (2.94.3-95.3), breeds chaos in the ranks: *consciis sibi instare donativom et deesse pecuniam omnia alia militi largiebatur* (“aware that the donative was upon him and that he was out of money, Vitellius lavished the soldiers with every manner of gift,” 2.94.2).²⁰⁹ Vespasian, however, faced with the unappealing and so far disastrous alternatives of extreme parsimony and extreme generosity, forges a more moderate path in the East.

The mobilizing of the war-effort against the Vitellians is impressive, thorough, and orderly.²¹⁰ With brevity and precision, Tacitus lists some of the early accomplishments and deeds of the aspiring regime: troops were levied; veterans were recalled; arms were manufactured and coins minted.²¹¹ Vespasian himself took a hands-on approach—inspecting his troops, offering

²⁰⁸ For further discussion and analysis of this extended mutiny narrative (1.80-85), see Haynes (1996) 188, Ash (1999) 31, and Manolaraki (2003) 112-50, who argues that it is “a narrative shorthand of the *Histories* itself.”

²⁰⁹ Cf. 2.94.1.

²¹⁰ On Josephus' account of the preparation for war (*BJ* 4.630), see Nicols (1978) 73.

²¹¹ What propagandistic role these coins may have played is unclear; see Nicols (1978) 96.

encouragement and censure as needed. He promoted many men to the high ranks of prefect, procurator, and senator. These were the “outstanding men” (*egregios viros*, 2.82.2), recruited primarily from the provinces, who would constitute the new aristocracy of the empire in the new era.²¹² In typical Tacitean fashion, this long, praising list “has a sting in the tail”:²¹³ the historian adds that “for certain men it was luck rather than virtue” (*quibusdam fortuna pro virtutibus fuit*, 2.82.2) that accounted for their promotion. Still, all in all, it is clear from the start that Vespasian’s challenge is built on solid ground.

It is into this atmosphere of competency that Tacitus broaches the subject of compensation. Vespasian was not afraid to offer non-monetary incentives when he wanted to secure loyalty and expand his army. His currently active legions, for example, were instructed “to entice the praetorians who hated Vitellius with the prize of readmission to their service” (*ut praetorianos Vitellio infensos reciperae militiae praemio invitarent*, 2.82.3). The rewards for loyalty extended up the ladder as well: in the months and years following the civil wars, Vespasian’s many legates and officers were rewarded prestigious promotions and adlections to priesthoods.²¹⁴ Nor was he shy about exacting money from his subjects when needed.²¹⁵ But, says Tacitus, when it came to direct cash give-outs, the Vespasian and Mucianus showed commendable restraint:²¹⁶

²¹² See Levick (1999) 170-83.

²¹³ Ash (2007) 321.

²¹⁴ See Nicols (1978) 99-124, esp. 108: “That these men received such rewards is consistent with what Tacitus says about how important the *legati amicitiae* were to Vespasian’s decision to revolt (*H.* 2.76.1; 81.3).”

²¹⁵ See esp. Griffin (2000) 30-32. Levick (1999) 48 suggests that “[t]o finance operations Vespasian must have raided the Judaeans war-chest.”

²¹⁶ What would have constituted a “modest donative” (*donativum...modice*)? According to Cass. Dio 65.22.2, Mucianus gave each soldier a mere 100 sesterces when he entered Rome, “one-ninth of a year’s wage” (Nicols (1978) 129). Levick (1999) 95 seems to accept Suetonius’ figure of 100, and notes that this is only a tiny fraction of the amount which Nymphidius Sabinus promised in gifts in Galba’s name: 1,250 sesterces to each legionary; six times that much to each member of the praetorian guard. Augustus, a plausible candidate of moderation, doled out 300 sesterces to each legionary and cohort in his will.²¹⁶ Perhaps Vespasian followed his example. For the Flavian donative of 69 CE, see also Flaig (1992) 465-69.

donativom militi neque Mucianus prima contione nisi modice ostenderat, ne Vespasianus quidem plus civili bello obtulit quam alii in pace, egregie firmus adversus militarem largitionem eoque exercitu meliore. (2.82.2)

Mucianus had not shown the soldiers more than a modest donative at the initial assembly. Nor did Vespasian offer more in civil war than others have in times of peace; he was impressively and firmly opposed to bribing his soldiers, and therefore had a better army.

According to Ash, “the implicit point of comparison for *exercitus melior*...is Vitellius’ army, flawed through bribery, and although the primary sense of *melior* is ‘more efficient,’ it also has a moral tone.”²¹⁷ Ash is certainly correct that Tacitus means to make a value judgment. On the point of the phrase’s implied referent, however, I suggest that Tacitus is seeking to make a more generalized statement concerning the state of bribery in the Year of Four Emperors and perhaps even Imperial Rome more generally. Large-scale bribery, as we saw in Chapter 1, had already been commonplace for decades when someone in the Galban administration (Nymphidius Sabinus?) first offered lavish sums of money to Galba’s followers; if he had not been unduly generous with his promises, Galba would not have been in a position to refuse payment. Vespasian and Mucianus, conversely, are on the same page on this issue. Together, they decline to make the mistake of their civil war predecessors. Tacitus plainly admires the decision: *meliore* is not only unabashedly positive, it has wide-reaching implications for a promising future. After all, as Tacitus famously writes, Vespasian was the only emperor who changed “for the better” (*in melius*, 1.50.4).

²¹⁷ Ash (2007) 322.

Conclusion

This chapter has been a meditation on Flavian success. As such, it has focused primarily on the positive qualities of competent people. Vitellian failure and ineptitude have been invoked, but only in order to give shape and meaning to the successes of their Flavian rivals. All this positivity could (rightly) make a student of Tacitus nervous—where does Tacitus negate all this success? When does the darkness creep in? One answer to questions such as these will be found in Chapter 3, where a decidedly immoderate Antonius Primus will be shown to represent a darker side of Flavian competency. Primus is Flavian competency and success run amok; his *exercitus* is decidedly not *melior*. Second, we ought to bear in mind that genuine recognition of competence does not necessarily equal moral approbation. Nevertheless, there is no denying that the Flavian acclamation presents the first, best indication that Galba's cavalier disregard for the institutions of imperial military society is not permanent, that the rupture of January 69 can be healed.

The success of the Tacitean Flavians rests in large part on their understanding of how oaths ought to work. Tacitus, alone among the extant sources of the Flavian acclamation, shows that Vespasian and (more so) Mucianus work together to engineer a delicate balance between complementary strategies. On the one hand, they cultivate the pre-existing enthusiasm and affection of the soldiery for their commander. They do not stamp out the treasonous rejection of the Vitellian oath. Nor do they attempt to force a Flavian oath down the soldiers' throats the first chance they get. Instead, they allow ill-will toward Vitellius to fester, while they shore up support among the officer corps and then patiently wait for an organic expression of loyalty to spring from the common soldiers. Such an expression ultimately arrives in the form of an imperial *salutatio* in Judaea. Though Vespasian is stunned into inaction, Mucianus takes over

and, by overseeing the administration of a series of *sacramenta*, turns one localized salutation into a region-wide coalition of support.

While there is no denying the overall skill on display here, there is something decidedly hollow about it. True, Vespasian, Mucianus, and their supporters together have managed to orchestrate some version of an ideal outcome. But the fact that these well-organized, oath-respecting legions never participate in the action to come, deflates somewhat the value of their achievement. The geographic insularity of the Flavian acclamation creates the sense that the whole affair is like a test case, a lab experiment that proves that the oath, under the right conditions, can thrive.

Chapter 3

The Calculations of Civil War

Soldiers' desires for self-enrichment may assume many forms. In Chapter 1, we saw Galba's army demand to be given a gift for their loyalty above and beyond their salary—an understandable desire, given the recent tradition of receiving donatives that had been in place since Claudius' accession. Yet there is another type of acquisitiveness, born out of Rome's long history of foreign conquest, which frequently motivates the behavior of the civil armies of 69 CE: the desire for plunder (*praeda*).²¹⁸ Though it is the donative which *secures* soldiers' initial loyalties, in the *Histories* it is often the license to plunder which commanders must grant in order to *maintain* that loyalty. For, if they do not, mutiny—the rending of the *sacramentum*—is often just around the corner.

There is an important distinction to be made between wanting the *rewards of* plunder, and wanting *to engage in* plunder. The former is common throughout Roman historiographical literature. When Roman forces seized a city by force, it was ideal practice to systematically loot the wealth of that city such that entire army shared in the profits, regardless of who actually did the pillaging.²¹⁹ If the general failed to oversee the distribution of profits, as he was duty-bound to do, unrest ensued.²²⁰ One of Rome's most storied periods, the Second Punic War, furnishes an excellent example. In 206 BCE, the soldiers on campaign with P. Cornelius Scipio in Spain run

²¹⁸ For plunder and greed in the civil war armies of the *Histories*, Ash (1999) remains the most important treatment; see esp. 111, 159-60. For the role of Roman greed in its foreign conquests, see most recently Adler (2011) 119-20, 136-38. Sallust (as Mithridates) provides us with perhaps the frankest expression of traditional Roman greed and acquisitiveness in foreign affairs: *namque Romanis cum nationibus populis regibus cunctis una et ea vetus causa bellandi est: cupido profunda imperi et divitiarum* ("For the Romans, there exists one ancient reason for going to against all nations, peoples and kings: the profound desire for imperial power and riches," *Hist.* fr. 5)

²¹⁹ Cf. Plb. 10.15.4-16.9 with Ziolkowski (1993), who shows that the Polybian ideal rarely held true in practice.

²²⁰ On the general's duty and expectation of sharing wartime profits, see Shatzman (1972).

out of money.²²¹ Even though Scipio owes his own army several years' worth of back-pay, he spends most of the plundered wealth buying Spanish loyalty. This lack of pay and of a share of the plunder, coupled with the long length of service and a lack of supplies, drives the soldiers to mutiny at the Spanish town of Sucro. Our sources agree that the mutineers did not use their newfound freedom to plunder or attack anyone.²²² Instead, they peacefully petition for restitution. Ultimately, Scipio gives them their back-pay and promises to forgive them their disobedience so long as they formally end their mutiny by swearing a new oath of loyalty.²²³

Tacitus' civil-warriors do not merely want the plunder and monetary rewards attending to military success; they also want *to* plunder and to wreak further devastation (murder, rape, arson). In some of the most horrific moments of the *Histories*, violence is even sought as an end in itself. When confronted with armies of this sort, what is a general to do? In this chapter, we will examine how two of the military leaders of the *Histories*—the Flavian Antonius Primus and the Vitellian Fabius Valens—handle this violent brand of greed. Whereas Valens attempts to curb the desire for violence and ultimately *fails* to control his army and stave off mutiny, Primus recognizes the necessity of giving the soldiers an outlet for their violent impulses, even harnessing their passions in service of Vespasian's cause. Large-scale mutiny is avoided. Primus' army mercilessly plunders and murders its way to victory, paving the way for Vespasian's eventual triumphant entrance into the capital. Ultimately, Tacitus' treatment of the violence and greed of Primus' army leaves his readers with an uneasy realization: the success of the Flavian *acclamation* may have been, in many respects, an exemplary display of moderation and a return to more traditional military mores, but the success of the Flavian *victory* over Vitellius not only

²²¹ For a discussion of role of money in this mutiny, see esp. Eckstein (1987) 202-203, Chrissanthos (1999) 89.

²²² Chrissanthos (1999) 89.

²²³ Liv. 28.29; Plb. 11.30.

strains good Roman morality and tradition, but even, as we will see, strains Roman identity itself.

PART 1: Antonius Primus, *raptor largitor*

As we saw in the previous chapter, it was the Eastern legions—first in Egypt, then in Vespasian’s own Judaea, then in Syria and everywhere else—who swore the first oaths to the soon-to-be new emperor (2.79-81). But Vespasian was also counting on support from the legions in Illyricum (2.74.1). After the acclamation, his wish was granted.²²⁴ First to join were the three Moesian legions.²²⁵ They had been deeply devoted to Otho, and upon learning of their emperor’s defeat at the First Battle of Cremona, ripped up Vitellius’ banners, and then, we are told, immediately proceeded self-indulgently to grab all the cash on hand and divvy it up among themselves (2.85.1). Clearly, Vespasian’s political future was not their first concern.²²⁶ Next, the formerly Othonian legions of neighboring Pannonia,²²⁷ who were also “holding onto the sorrow and rage from Cremona, joined Vespasian without hesitation, particularly because of the forcefulness of Antonius Primus” (*dolorem iramque Bedriacensis pugnae retinentes, haud cunctanter Vespasiano accessere, vi praecipua Primi Antonii*, 2.86.1). It is in this off-handed

²²⁴ Vespasian hoped to secure the allegiance of the Danubian legions when the Flavian bid was still in the planning stage, but did not actually do so until after the acclamation; cf. 2.74.1. For the differing chronologies of events in the parallel tradition, cf. Suet. *Vit.* 15.1, *Vesp.* 6.3 and Jos. *BJ* 4.619, with Ash (2007) 331.

²²⁵ These were the Third Gallic (*III Gallica*), Seventh Claudian (*VII Claudia*), and Eighth Augustan (*VIII Augusta*); see Chilver (1979) 18. Tacitus notes that Vespasian was confident in the loyalty of *Gallica III* because it had recently moved to Moesia from Syria (2.74.1). Nicols (1978) 132 observes that “Tacitus, in comparison to [the] description of events on the Rhine in January [1.55-60] and in Judaea in the [s]pring [2.1-8, 74-86], gives no details about the *defectio* of the *III Gallica* from Vitellius in Augustus 69; not one name is mentioned nor is the spread of the revolt from the *legio III* to the other Moesian legions explained.”

²²⁶ Ash (2007) 331 calls the cash-grab a “grubby and opportunistic outbreak, certainly no idealistic swelling of support for Vespasian.”

²²⁷ *XIII Gemina* and *VII Galbiana*. Note the distinction between the *VII Claudia* (based in Moesia) and *VII Galbiana* (based in Pannonia). See Chilver (1979) 18 and Ash (2007) 335.

way²²⁸ that Tacitus introduces the main protagonist of book 3 and the member of the Flavian party most directly responsible for victory against Vitellius. Tacitus' Primus is an opportunist and a survivor:²²⁹ though convicted of fraud and stripped of senatorial rank under Nero (2.86.1), he was restored to good standing by Galba, only to attempt to betray Galba for Otho (2.86.2)! Otho ignored him; so, when Vitellius' fortunes began to slip, he threw his support behind Vespasian (2.86.2). Tacitus then caps Primus' career with a pithy character sketch:²³⁰

strenuus manu, sermone promptus, serendae in alios invidiae artifex, discordiis et seditionibus potens, raptor largitor, pace pessimus, bello non spernendus. (2.86.2)

Physically energetic and a ready talker, he made an art out of cultivating hatred against others and was powerful against riots and mutinies; a generous plunderer; a scoundrel in peacetime, but a force to be reckoned with in war.

RAPTOR LARGITOR

The most dynamic of all the “lieutenants” of all four emperors,²³¹ Primus is also the most consequential Flavian in the extant narrative, since it is he who delivers the decisive blow to the Vitellians.²³² (Mucianus arrives in Rome with his legions after Vitellius' execution (4.11);

²²⁸ Ash (2007) 335 aptly calls this “appended abl. of manner” [*vi praecipua Primi Antonii*] a “playful touch.” For the life and career of Antonius Primus, see Nicols (1978) 38-39, Ash (1999) 147-65, Levick (1999) 49-53, and Morgan (2006) 189-90 and *passim*.

²²⁹ The parallel tradition does not treat Primus march into Italy anywhere near as extensively as Tacitus does. Morgan (2006) 190 sums it up nicely: “...Dio provides material on a few episodes; Suetonius skips over almost every event between September and November, referring to explicitly to the sack of Cremona only in his *Life* of Vespasian; and Josephus contributes an interesting snippet or two.”

²³⁰ Master (2012) 86 highlights the full sentence (*labantibus...spernendus*) as a prime example of Tacitus' tendency to place the bulk of the important information in successive dependent clauses following the main clause: “A series of predicate adjectives and nouns and a final gerundive display a variety of figures of speech and structuring devices including chiasmus, parallelism, and *variatio*. There are individual moments of balance, for example, *strenuus manu, sermone promptus* and *raptor largitor*, but the overall structure of the sentence is unevenly weighted and lacking in harmony.” Cf. O’Gorman (2000) 4 on A. 2.5.1: “The subordinate clause...is the predominant feature of both narrative and historical explanation.” See also Martin (1981) 221.

²³¹ The other “lieutenants” are Fabius Valens, Aulus Caecina, and Mucianus. The term “lieutenant” in this context is non-technical; it refers to these men’s subordinate status to the emperors and future emperors they serve.

²³² According to Tacitus, Vespasian himself recognized this fact; cf. 4.80.2. Damon (2006) 273: “There is no willful blindness in Vespasian but rather a careful search for the right balance among due reward for merit, the claims of his other supporters, and his own safety and authority.”

Vespasian does not even arrive in Italy until after the text breaks off.) Though Primus' rival, Mucianus, will eventually squeeze him out of Vespasian's inner circle,²³³ any discussion of Tacitus' depiction of the Flavian regime must seriously consider the man who, more than any other, did the heavy lifting to bring that regime into existence.

Yet for all he did to advance Vespasian's cause, Primus' decision to slash southward into Italy without Mucianus' army defies Vespasian's more cautious plan to starve Vitellius into submission (3.8.2).²³⁴ This decision to go it alone was either "unknown to Vespasian or against his direct orders" (*quae ignara Vespasiano aut vetita* 3.8.2).²³⁵ In either case, Vespasian *had* in fact issued orders to Primus to stay put and wait for Mucianus (3.8.2); Mucianus had also sent letters to similar effect (3.8.3). Yet both men fail to slow Primus, who successfully pursues a violent resolution all on his own. This sort of cavalier behavior comes as no surprise: as we saw in the character sketch above (2.86), Primus serves many men but always himself first.

The strong-willed Primus is capable of stirring his soldiers to action with his eloquence and forceful personality. For instance, in order to convince his army to follow him in an offensive movement down into Italy, Primus delivers a speech with such passion that "he persuaded even the wary and prudent, while the rest of the rabble praised him as the only man and general they had, spurning the others' inactivity" (*ut cautos quoque ac providos permoveret, volgus et ceteri unum virum ducemque, spreta aliorum segnitia, laudibus ferrent*, 3.3).²³⁶ These

²³³ Immediately after Vitellius' execution, Primus had the "greatest power" (*summa potentiae*, 4.2.1), but once Mucianus came to town, that began to change (4.11.1). Mucianus, long Primus' bitter rival, manipulated Vespasian into excluding the war-hero from civilian governance (3.52-53; 4.80).

²³⁴ That is, by withholding delivery of essential Egyptian grain. Levick (1999) 53 seems to accept the historical accuracy of Tacitus' formulation. For a skeptical discussion of the historical plausibility and seriousness of Vespasian's strategy, see Griffin (2000) 5, Morgan (2006) 187-89.

²³⁵ *ignara* here has a passive sense (= *ignota*); see Wellesley (1972) 85. According to Bassols de Climent (1951) 15, "El uso de *ignarus* con acepción pasiva (es decir, en vez de *ignotus*) no es clásico." However, cf., e.g., *Sal. Jug.* 18.6, 52.4 (cited at *TLL* vii/1.275.80-276.12).

²³⁶ Tacitus describes Primus' impassioned style of delivery as follows: *haec ac talia flagrans oculis, truci voce, quo latius audiretur*... ("he said these and similar things with flashing eyes and a fierce voice, so that he could be heard

same skills also come in handy for quashing the seditious activity of money-minded soldiers. In one episode, early in the campaign, Primus' Seventh Galban Legion become spooked when they mistake approaching allied cavalry for hostiles. Seized by vengeful panic, they call for the unpopular Tampius Flavianus²³⁷ to be put to death, "scream[ing] that he was a relative of Vitellius, a traitor to Otho, and the one who stole their donative!" (*propinquum Vitellii, proditorem Othonis, interceptorem donativi clamitabant*, 3.10.2).²³⁸ When Flavianus responded to these accusations with abject supplication and uncontrollable sobbing, the legions were even more convinced of his guilt. When Flavianus and the other officers tried to present a defense, their voices were drowned out by the legions' shouts. Primus alone (*uni Antonio*, 3.10.3) managed to cut through the noise and quiet them, "for he possessed eloquence and the ability to soothe a mob, as well as authority" (*namque et facundia aderat mulcendique volgum artes et auctoritas*, 3.10.3). Primus may have quashed this particular mutiny (3.10.4), thereby proving for the first time that he was indeed "in control of riots and mutinies" (*discordiis et seditionibus potens*, 2.86.2).²³⁹ The legions' mutinous spirit, however, had not been extinguished (3.11). Throughout the campaign to come, Primus would often face unruly and greedy soldiers, and would need to rely on more than charisma and eloquence to keep them under control.

Within the character sketch (2.86.2), Tacitus previews Primus' strategy for managing his acquisitive and occasionally mutinous civil-war army in a provocative two-word

better," 3.3.1). For a discussion of the contents of Primus' clever and successful speech at Poetovio (3.2.4), see Ash (1999) 152-57.

²³⁷ According to Tacitus (3.4), Tampius Flavianus was in fact a relative of Vitellius'. Though he does not fare well here, he survives the wars of 69 and attains the office of suffect consul ca. 76; see Levick (1999) 177.

²³⁸ We do not know much about this donative, or even whether it was Otho or Vitellius who promised it; see Wellesley (1972) 237.

²³⁹ I adapt this translation from Manolaraki (2003) 166-69, who notes that the collocation *seditionibus potens* is quite rare, only appearing in fact outside Tacitus (cf. *H.* 1.10.2, 60, 73) in Vergil's introduction of Drances (*seditione potens*, *A.* 11.340).

homoeoteleuton: *raptor largitor* (“plunderer and lavish giver [of bribes]”).²⁴⁰ The significance of these agent nouns is bound together. *raptor*, as Tacitus no doubt realized, is slightly inaccurate: Primus himself does not plunder anyone, nor is he particularly excited to see anyone plundered; rather, he allows and even encourages his *soldiers* to be plunderers. Nor, as *largitor* suggests, does Primus keep the profits. The two clearly-related meanings of *largitor*—“a person who gives liberally, a bestower, benefactor” (*OLD* s.v. 1), and “a person who gives money corruptly, a briber” (*OLD* s.v. 2)—both speak to Primus’ strategy:²⁴¹ by granting his legions permission to plunder, he in effect *both* sets himself up as their benefactor *and* bribes them not to mutiny. This “one-two punch”—i.e., plundering innocent civilians while generously sharing the accrued wealth with his soldiers—flies in the face of Vespasian’s idea of how best to handle an army: in Chapter 2, we saw that Vespasian was “impressively and firmly opposed to bribing his soldiers, and therefore had a better army” (*egregie firmus adversus militarem largitionem, eoque exercitu meliore*, 2.82.2). It is somewhat ironic, then, that Primus’ particular, violent brand of bribery (*raptor largitor*) leads his army to victory in Vespasian’s name. We will see throughout this chapter that Primus, under Flavian banners, plunders his way toward Rome, and in the process supervises the shocking brutalization and destruction of Cremona, a friendly Italian city, and eventually of Rome itself. It is no wonder that Vespasian distances himself from the general after the war (4.80).²⁴²

²⁴⁰ The collocation is found only here. For a similar formulation, cf. *praedae...largitor* (“generous distributor of plunder,” Liv. 9.42.5). Sallust calls Catiline *cuius rei lubet simulator ac dissimulator* (“capable of pretending or concealing anything at all,” *Cat.* 5.4; trans. Ramsey (2007) 70).

²⁴¹ *OLD* s.v. 2 claims 2.86.2 as an example, however.

²⁴² Robbed of both influence and position in Vespasian’s administration (4.80), Primus apparently retires to Tolosa. He does not appear in the record again until the 90s, when Martial (10.23) writes an epigram on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday. Ash (1999) 148 notes that these verses may contain “a hidden defense of Primus’ contribution to the civil war. ... This is hardly a forthright denunciation of Primus’ critics, but the fact that Martial felt the need for such a diplomatic tone so long after the civil war indicates that Flavian resentment toward the general to whom they owed so much had not decreased.”

Ultimately, however, Vespasian and Mucianus can only distance themselves from Primus the *raptor largitor* so far without opening themselves up to charges of hypocrisy. For, despite Vespasian's *exercitus melior* and aversion to direct bribery (*largitionem*, 2.82.2), Tacitus does not allow Primus to be the repository of all Flavian shame. There was, in fact, a darker, grubbier side to the Flavian acclamation than we encountered in Chapter 2: many of Vespasian's own supporters have a long-standing desire for plunder (*multos dulcedo preadarum stimulabat*, "a desire for plunder spurred on many," 2.7.2).²⁴³ Josephus' contention (*BJ* 4.585) that the Eastern legions rallied around Vespasian because they disliked the Vitellians' depredations of Italy is a detail found nowhere else in the *Histories*.²⁴⁴ Even Vespasian himself, for all his virtues, possesses the vice of greed (*prorsus, si avaritia abesset, antiquis ducibus par*, "all in all, if it were not for his greed, he would have been the equal of the generals of old," 2.5.1).²⁴⁵ Later, as waves of oaths to Vespasian sweep the Eastern provinces (2.79-81), Mucianus appeals to his legions' higher earning potential under a Flavian regime, warning that Vitellius was planning to "transfer the German legions to Syria for a profitable and peaceful posting" (*Germanicas legiones in Syriam ad militam opulentam quietamque transferret*, 2.80.3), and to send the Syrian

²⁴³ On *dulcedo praedarum*, Ash (2007) 95: "[Tacitus] elsewhere attributes this discreditable motivation to German tribes (*praedae dulcidine*, *G.* 33.1)." For the pejorative connotations of *dulcedo* in Livy, see Oakley (1997) 713.

²⁴⁴ Nicols (1978) 95-96 identifies three aspects of Flavian propaganda present in Josephus' account: "First, the acclamation of Vespasian was a spontaneous movement of angry and patriotic soldiers who had just learned of the Vitellian depredations of Italy and Rome [*Jos. BJ* 4.585ff]. Second, the reluctant Vespasian had the empire forced upon him by his soldiers (*Jos. BJ* 1.24; 4.601). And, third, Vespasian hoped to win a bloodless victory."

²⁴⁵ This passage caps a longer, largely flattering, character sketch of the soon-to-be emperor: *Vespasianus, acer militiae anteire agmen, locum castris capere, noctu diuque consilio ac, si res posceret, manu hostibus obniti, cibo fortuito, veste habituque vix a gregario milite discrepans; prorsus, si avaritia abesset, antiquis ducibus par* ("Vespasian, every inch the soldiers, marched at the front of the line, chose where to encamp, and, day and night, struggled against his enemies by holding council and—if the situation demanded—by entering combat. He ate when he could; his clothing and uniform scarcely differed from a common soldier's. All in all, if it were not for his greed, he would have been the equal of the generals of old," 2.5.1; translation adapted from Ash (2007) 86).

legions to Germany, where the weather was harsher and the work harder.²⁴⁶ *opulentam* (*OLD* s.v. 1, “profitable”) successfully, if tactfully, hints at the money the legions stand to lose if Vitellius has his way.²⁴⁷—A better army, yes, but hardly a perfect one, as Tacitus makes clear.

FLAVIAN SCALES

Only two days after departing from his base at Verona,²⁴⁸ Primus arrives in the neighborhood of Bedriacum, where he wastes no time instilling in his army some unsavory patterns of behavior:

postero die legionibus ad muniendum retentis, auxiliares cohortes in Cremonensem agrum missae, ut specie parandarum copiarum civili praeda miles imbueretur: ipse cum quattuor milibus equitum ad octavum a Bedriaco progressus, quo licentius popularentur. (3.15.2).

On the following day, while keeping back the legions to fortify the camp, the auxiliary cohorts were sent into the country around Cremona, in order that the common soldiers might acquire an early taste of civilian plunder, though under the pretense of gathering supplies: Primus himself, along with 4,000 cavalry, advanced to within eight miles from Bedriacum in order to pillage undisturbed.

This “siguläre Wendung” of *praeda* and *imbuo* suggests that a behavior is being learned; *imbuo*, beyond simply “to imbue,” connotes training and initiation (*OLD* s.v. 4).²⁴⁹ Later, in the midst of

²⁴⁶ Tacitus goes on to remark that the local provincials and the legions had grown fond of, and accustomed to one another, “many having formed ties of intimacy and kinship” (*plerique necessitudinibus et propinquitatibus mixti*, 2.80.3; trans. Irvine). On these legions’ long tenure in Syria, see Levick (1999) 58 and Ash (2007) 314.

²⁴⁷ Ash (2007) 313: “The combination *militia* + *opulenta* is unique, but T[acitus] plays with words, since *opulentus* can mean both ‘profitable’ (*OLD* s.v. 1), as here, and ‘well supplied with military resources’ (*OLD* s.v. 2).”

²⁴⁸ From the beginning of Primus’ campaign, Tacitus emphasizes the tactically-advantageous speed and brutal efficiency. Cf. Ash (1999) 152: “In Tacitus’ eyes, Antonius Primus’ action [at 3.15.1] is justifiable, given the possibility of escalation: the phrase *immensa belli lues* graphically reflects the potentially massive destruction which could have resulted from delay.”

²⁴⁹ See Heubner (1972) 60. Wellesley (2009) 133 translates “to acquire a taste for plundering Roman civilians.” Cf. Bassols de Clement (1951) 30: “para que los soldados se fuesen acostumbrando (empezaran a encontrar gusto) a saqueo de los ciudadanos.” Later, after the battle of Cremona, Primus allowed the legionaries to replace their own commanders “in order that the common soldiers acquire a taste for license” (*ut...licentia militem imbueret*, 3.49.1). In his commentary, Wellesley (1972) 99 takes issue with the historicity of 3.15.2: “The auxiliaries would normally get their booty from enemies outside the Roman empire. The remark is tendentious; Antonius’ purpose was obviously to lure the Vitellian troops well away from their camp.” This sort of craven behavior, following as it does immediately upon Tacitus’ descriptions of Primus’ exceptional charisma and eloquence, begins to confirm the apt assessment of Ash (1999) 148: “Tacitus offers us a disturbing portrait of a man who possesses the practical flair associated with the ideal general, but whose moral code allows him to use sinister methods for the sake of short term expediency.”

battle, Primus “spurred everyone on with hopes and promises” (*omnes spe promissisque accendens*, 3.24.1). As Ash rightly observes, “[w]e are not told what these hopes and promises are, but the implication is that plunder and money is involved.”²⁵⁰ Such incentivizing helps shape the desire for plunder that will determine the course of events.

In the lead-up to the destruction first of the Vitellian legionary camp (3.27-29), then of Cremona (3.30-34), Tacitus provides a glimpse of how Primus’ men conceptualize the risks of war in relation to the rewards of victory:

*quae super cuncta terrebat ipsorum miles periculi quam morae patientior: quippe ingrati quae tuta, ex temeritate spes; [a] omnisque caedes et [b] vulnera et [c] sanguis aviditate praedae pensabantur. [27.1] *huc inclinavit Antonius cingique vallum corona iussit.* (3.26.3-27.1)*

[Antonius Primus and his fellow officers’] own army, more tolerant as it was of danger than of delay, was the thing that terrified them more than anything: the men scorned what was safe, their expectations were rash; [a] all slaughter, [b] wounds and [c] shedding of blood was compensated for by their greed for plunder. [27.1] Antonius was inclined to agree and ordered a ring of troops to surround the rampart.²⁵¹

The narrative perspective here is sophisticated: Tacitus does not simply record the feelings of the soldiers; rather, he records how Primus and the other officers *perceive* the soldiers’ feelings.²⁵²

The literal meaning of *penso* is to weigh something out, such as gold or other valuables, for commercial purposes (*OLD* s.v. 1).²⁵³ The “scales” of Primus’ army, however, are metaphorical (*OLD* s.v. 4), and thus represent the “commodification” of violence. On one side of the scales lie death, injury, and bloodshed; on the other, plunder as reward for their suffering, and the greed

²⁵⁰ Ash (1999) 159n45 notes further that “[p]romises in the *Histories* are often financial in nature: see 1.25.1, 2.8.1, 3.58.3, and 4.30.2.”

²⁵¹ The translation of 3.26.3 is my own; that of 3.27.1 is adapted from Wellesley (2009) 140.

²⁵² Wellesley (1972) 113 posits a likely setting: “[T]acitus seems to be recording the reflections of the [generals] at a hurried council of war on the field.”

²⁵³ *Sil.* 1.624, 4.153; cf. 4.273, *Liv.* 48.8-9. These passages and their possible significances for the *Histories* will be discussed later in this chapter.

which will motivate them to grab that reward.²⁵⁴ The implication is that without the opportunity to remain active and engaged in plunder, they will not tolerate hardship for long.²⁵⁵ Primus understands that the strength of the soldiers' "greed for plunder" (*aviditate praedae*) is such that it can carry them through anything, which is why he opts for an immediate assault (*huc inclinavit*).²⁵⁶ He also understands that a delay would be dangerous to try to impose on this impatient lot. Given the premium the men place on action over safety, it is clear that *praeda* ("plunder"), in this instance, refers not merely to "booty (taken in war, robbery, or sim. circumstances), plunder, spoil, loot" (*OLD* s.v. 1a), but to "the act or practice of plundering, spoliation, pillage" (*OLD* s.v. 1c) as well.²⁵⁷ The soldiers *need* action; Primus knows that, and is willing to give it to them in the form of *praeda* (*OLD* s.v. 1c). Furthermore, by setting himself up as the dispenser (*largitor*) of *praeda*—in both senses of the word—Primus is in better position to lead his army toward his ultimate goal: the destruction of the Vitellian army.

The Vitellians have holed themselves up within the well-fortified legionary camp, which was constructed by the German legions during the conflict with Otho. Nearby lies the provincial city of Cremona (3.26.1).²⁵⁸ Though the city's inhabitants are staunch supporters of Vitellius (3.30.1), the city itself has little or no strategic value for Primus as a military target. So the Flavians, sensibly, proceed to lay siege to the camp, rather than Cremona. The besieged Vitellians rain stones and spears down on their assailants:

²⁵⁴ For a similar commodification of *sanguis* identified throughout Lucanian and Flavian epic, see Coffee (2009), esp. 132-33, 148, 160, 196-97.

²⁵⁵ Cf. Master (2016) 45-48, who has recently argued that "[f]or the Romans to persuade non-Romans to risk their lives for Rome...rewards, especially the rewards of citizenship, are necessary."

²⁵⁶ Pace Wellesley (1972) 113: "Antonius concurs, willy-nilly." Heubner (1972) 77 translates *huc inclinavit* expansively: "hierfür (d. h. für unverzüglichen Angriff) entschied sich Antonius."

²⁵⁷ Underlining added for emphasis.

²⁵⁸ Wellesley (1972) 112-13 translates *moenibus Cremonensium castra sua, castris vallum circumiecerat* (3.26.1) as "they had built their camp *near* the walls of Cremona, and constructed a rampart *around* the camp" [emphasis in the original]. For examples of *circum* in the sense of "near" (as opposed to "around"), he cites *militari vallo Veronam circumdare* (3.10.1) and *circumiectas civitatis* (43.1) in *Histories* 3 alone.

donec solute compage scutorum [c] exsangues aut [b] laceros prosternerent [a] multa cum strage, incesserat cunctatio, ni duces militi et velut inritas exhortationes abnuenti Cremonam monstrassent. (3.27.3)

until the compact structure of the shields fell apart and they could flatten [c] their bleeding or [b] maimed opponents [a] with deadly slaughter. Hesitation had set in, but their generals, finding the men worn out and deaf to exhortation which seemed pointless, pointed suggestively to Cremona.²⁵⁹

The terms in Primus' initial consideration of the injuries which the opportunity to plunder (*OLD* s.v. *praeda* 1c) was deemed to offset ([a] *omnisque caedes* ... [b] *vulnera* ... [c] *sanguis*, 3.26.3) correspond chiastically to the soldiers' actual hardships suffered in this subsequent attack on the Vitellian camp ([c] *exsangues* ... [b] *laceros* ... [a] *multa cum strage*, 3.27.3).²⁶⁰ With this semantic mirroring, Tacitus artfully suggests a link between the two passages: the siege (3.27.3) puts Primus' supposition about the soldiers' motives (3.26.3) to the test. At this point, the soldiers, by suffering significant bodily harm and death, have satisfied the conditions of one side of the "scale." But, as of yet, they have no plunder to show for it. So it comes as no surprise that their resolve begins to waver. *incesserat cunctatio* implies that the soldiers were, in the absence of plunder, prepared to stop the assault. But Primus and the other commanders intervene, "point[ing]" (*monstrassent*, 3.27.3) to Cremona. In this way, Primus and his fellow officers offer up Cremona as a sacrificial victim to the army's greed: the promise of wealth that Cremona represents rebalances the "scales" with a massive amount of potential *praeda* and thereby incentivizes the *miles* to continue the fight.

The tactic works extremely well; the Flavians now fight with reckless abandon:

non iam [c] sanguis neque [b] vulnera morabantur, quin subruerunt vallum quaterentque portas, innixi umeris et super iteratam testudinem scandentes prensarent hostium tela brachiaque. integri cum [b] sauciis, [a] semineces cum

²⁵⁹ Translation adapted in part from Wellesley (2009). On the *exhortationes* of Otho, see Keitel (1987).

²⁶⁰ Woodman (2012) 257-90 has identified chiasmus in the preface of the *Agricola*. For chiasmus on a smaller scale, see Goodyear (1981) 186.

expirantibus voluntur, varia [a] pereuntium forma et omni imagine [a] mortium.
(3.28)

Now neither the [c] shedding of blood nor their [b] wounds stopped them from rushing upon the rampart and shaking the gates, standing on the shoulders of their comrades in testudo formation they grasped at the spears and limbs of the enemy. The unhurt and the [b] wounded, the [a] nearly-dead and the [a] dying were piled together in a heap; [a] death had many shapes and took on many forms.

The second half (*c-b-a*) of the chiasmus is repeated, providing even stronger evidence that Tacitus has crafted a sustained relationship between reward and suffering in these chapters. Moreover, the crescendo of semantic repetitions (*c-b-b-a-a-a*) serves to darken the tone and drive home how far the soldiers were willing to go for the promise of monetary reward.

Kenneth Wellesley objects to Tacitus' reportage of Primus' actions on historical and logical grounds: "Considerable suspicion attaches to this sentence [i.e., *cunctatio...monstrasset*, 3.27.3] as a statement of fact, for the troops were already well aware of the possibility of plunder at Cremona, and knew their own power."²⁶¹ It is indeed possible that, *in the actual course of events*, Primus and his lieutenants may have had little to no leverage to control the lusts of the common soldiers, and that the sack of Cremona was essentially a foregone conclusion. In other words, Wellesley is not wrong to question the historical accuracy of any account of the destruction of Cremona which imbues Primus with the potential authority to restrain his army. But that is largely beside the point. All the evidence on which one might construct an argument of plausibility such as Wellesley has, derives from Tacitus' and others' accounts—Tacitus' being by far the fullest. In other words, to disprove Tacitus, Wellesley would need to rely either on Tacitus himself or mere appeals to probability. In short, rather than measure Tacitus' account against what cannot be known (i.e., whether Primus *actually* pointed to Cremona), we ought to

²⁶¹ Wellesley (1972) 115 also finds it less than credible that "a verbal promise [i.e., *monstrasset*, 3.27.3] of what they already regarded as theirs could have enabled the troops to pass over so suddenly to a successful offense [3.28]."

consider *why* Tacitus decided to include this detail and what its inclusion may signify. My analysis of chiasmic repetition provides an answer: Primus' decision to attack the camp (and as of yet not the city) contained within it an implicit promise to his soldiers that they could plunder the camp for valuables in order to satisfy the losses they would suffer in the hard siege. However, the camp would have contained only a modest amount of wealth, so the soldiers were not willing to commit to large losses to sack it. Primus understood this and therefore in the heat of battle offered Cremona as a fat reward, worthy of the intense challenge that the taking of the camp fortifications proved to be.²⁶²

Before the siege of the legionary camp ever began, both Primus and the common soldiers realized that the city of Cremona represented a huge potential payday. Primus was in no position to deny the soldiers their desires for plunder, and he knew it. Even attempting to *delay* the opportunity to plunder nearly sparked a mutiny.

As the entire Flavian force finally convenes near Cremona on the night before the assault, the soldiers, many coming off a successful skirmish against the Vitellians outside the city (3.18), are eager to storm the gates as soon as possible and force a quick surrender—so, remarks Tacitus, was their “fine-spoken public stance” (*haec in medio, pulchra dictu*, 3.19.1). However, the soldiers' privately held feelings and motivations to which Tacitus claims access (*illa sibi quisque*, “these things each man kept to himself,” 3.19.1) undercut the pure martial spirit of their official line and reveal an army deeply concerned with personal gain.²⁶³

²⁶² My interpretation is close to that of Pomeroy (2012) 141: “In the third book of the *Histories*, Tacitus, in the midst of a vivid battle scene, has the Flavian commanders, desperate to encourage their soldiers into one final effort, pointing out the prize of victory in the nearby city of Cremona (*Hist.* 3.27.3). This strategy worked, although it involved a Roman army pillaging a Roman city and the civilians inside being brutally mistreated by those who were meant to be their protectors. This was the greatest outrage of the civil wars of 69 CE.”

²⁶³ Ash (1999) 160 remarks that the Flavian soldiers' decision to “veil their private craving for booty by pretending to want to press on towards Cremona and enforce the surrender of the enemy” reveals a “sensitiv[ity] about their

illa sibi quisque: posse coloniam plano sitam impetu capi. idem audaciae per tenebras inrupentibus et maiorem rapiendi licentiam. quod si lucem opperiantur, iam pacem, iam preces, et pro labore ac volneribus clementiam et gloriam, inania, laturos, sed opes Cremonensium in sinu praefectorum legatorumque fore. Expugnatae urbis praedam ad militem, deditae ad duces pertinere. (3.19.2)

But on the other hand, each man privately thought that the colony, which lay on flat ground, could be seized in a direct assault, and that, if they attacked at night, they would have the same measure of courage and a greater license to plunder. But if they waited for daylight, there would be peace and supplication, and that, in exchange for their effort and their wounds, they would win glory and a reputation for clemency—pointless things!—but that the wealth of the Cremonese would fall into the lap of the prefects and legates: the booty of a sacked city belonged to the soldiery, that of a surrendered city to the commanders.

The soldiers' secret thoughts about Cremona in this passage anticipate the same sort of calculations—material gain as compensation for personal effort and loss (underlined above)—to which Primus accedes (*huc inclinavit*) in the nighttime scene before the attack (3.26.3-27.1). The soldiers' cynicism and greed fit well their disdain for the traditionally positive Roman qualities *clementia* and *gloria*.²⁶⁴

When the soldiers finally give outward expression to these private passions, they do so non-verbally:

spernuntur centuriones tribunique, ac ne vox cuiusquam audiat, quatunt arma, rupturi imperium, ni ducantur. (3.19.2)

The centurions and tribunes were spurned, and lest anyone's voice be heard, they clashed their weapons to indicate that they would break his power if they were not led onwards.²⁶⁵

image." This sensitivity is visible in Primus as well, when he sends auxiliaries into the area around Cremona to acquire a taste for plunder, but does so under the pretext of foraging for supplies (3.15.2). Cf. Ash (1999) 65: "Tacitus exploits the contrast between appearance and reality, just as he did with his supposition about the Flavian auxiliaries apparently collecting supplies, but actually acquiring a taste for plundering fellow citizens (3.15.2). Antonius Primus' gambit seems to have worked because when the troops finally reach Cremona, any fear of death is outweighed 'by their eagerness for plunder' (3.26.3. cf. Justin's *Epitome* 11.5.9). Self-preservation now means little to the greedy Flavians."

²⁶⁴ Cf. 3.24.2, where Antonius urges Pannonian legions to "recover their glory" (*reciperare gloriam*).

²⁶⁵ Translation adapted from Wellesley (2009) 135.

rupturi imperium, a periphrasis for threatening mutiny, recalls the German legions' decision to break their reverence for the oath of loyalty (*rupta sacramenti reverentia*, 1.12.1) at the start of the 69 CE narrative, the moment when the crises of the *Histories* began. Thus, the situation in northern Italy has been marked as serious. Among the generals, only the charismatic Primus demonstrates that he understands the plunder-obsessed mindset which lies behind this threat to mutiny—unvoiced though it is—when he “affirm[s] that he was not trying to rob such deserving men as they of either their glory or their reward” (*non se decus neque pretium eripere tam bene meritis adfirmabat*, 3.20.1).²⁶⁶ Then Primus, in order to reassert some control, articulates his own plan of attack, marked by close attention to detail and a brutal pragmatism: rather than object to taking Cremona by force on any moral grounds, the general argues that the darkness puts them at a disadvantage, and that the proper siege weapons required for success in an assault of this kind have not yet arrived (3.20.3). “Why not,” he implores, “wait for just one night...?” (*quin potius mora noctis unius*, 3.20.3). He defends his right to delay the assault by articulating a theory of the separate duties of soldiers and generals: the former, he concedes, ought to “love fighting” (*cupidinem pugnandi*, 3.20.1; cf. *aviditate praedae*, 3.26.3),²⁶⁷ while the latter are required occasionally to curb recklessness for the greater good (3.20.1). Clearly, Primus never intended to check to the soldiers' violent and greedy impulses with regard to Cremona; he merely wanted to channel those impulses towards the best possible military outcome. Yet even that little bit of prudence nearly provoked a mutiny (*prope seditionem ventum* 3.21.1)!²⁶⁸ It was only the timely news of a Vitellian advance that reined in their seditious spirit and brought them back under

²⁶⁶ Otho exhibits a similar sensitivity to the realities of troop behavior during civil war: *volgus et plures seditionibus et ambitioso imperio laeti per turbas et raptus facilius ad civile bellum impellerentur* (“the majority of the common soldiers, delighting as they do in mutiny and imperial power that campaigned for their affection, could be compelled into civil war more easily through rioting and plunder,” 1.83.1).

²⁶⁷ Heubner (1972) 66 notes of *cupidinem pugnandi*: “die Verbindung nur hier und Amm. 21.3.3.”

²⁶⁸ For this phrase, cf. Liv. 26.48.8 and Curt. 4.10.4, with Heubner (1972) 68.

Primus' control (3.21.1-2). This close call shows just how volatile these civil war soldiers are—and how essential it was that Primus and his fellow generals point to Cremona.

After the walls of Cremona are breached, and its inhabitants are left exposed to the whims and passions of the Flavian army, Tacitus presents a Primus and officer corps who do virtually nothing to prevent catastrophe. At first, when the soldiers begin to rough up the townspeople, the generals manage to calm them down enough to prevent full-scale slaughter (3.32.1). Thereupon Primus, true to form, steps forward and speaks.²⁶⁹ Tacitus summarizes Primus' message (in indirect discourse) as follows:

et vocatos ad contionem Antonius adloquitur, magnifice victores, victos clementer, de Cremona in neutrum. (3.32.1)

Antonius also called a general assembly of the soldiers; he addressed the victors admiringly and the vanquished with mercy, but didn't say anything one way or the other about Cremona.

Given that the issue at hand is the safety of the city's inhabitants, Primus has, in effect, said nothing at all. This de-facto silence echoes Primus' non-verbal indicating (*monstrasset*, 3.27.3), and like that earlier episode ought to be construed as tacit consent to plunder.²⁷⁰

Primus at this point retires to the baths to wash off the blood from battle (3.32.3), thereby indicating his disinterest in participating in further violence, as well as his acceptance of the soldiers' earlier contention that "the booty of a sacked city belonged to the soldiery, that of a surrendered city to the commanders" (3.19.2). As Tacitus makes clear with the following anecdote (and analysis), the general neither gives the final command to destroy Cremona nor

²⁶⁹ For Primus' penchant to step forward and address the assembled soldiers, see the discussions of 3.10.3 and 3.20.1 above.

²⁷⁰ Pace Wellesley (1972): "that the Flavian commanders extended a direct invitation to plunder the city [at 3.27.3] seems to be excluded by the words of T[acitus] at 32.1."

fears that he has lost control of them.²⁷¹ Rather, he is content to observe from a distance what he has helped to set in motion:²⁷²

excepta vox est, cum teporem incusaret, statim futurum ut in<c>alescerent: vernile dictum omnem invidiam in eum vertit, tamquam signum incendendae Cremonae dedisset, quae iam flagrabat. (3.32.3)²⁷³

As he complained about the lukewarm water, he was overheard saying, “things will be heating up soon!”—a witticism worthy of a slave that turned everyone’s ire toward him, as if he had given the signal to set fire to Cremona, which was in fact already burning.

Earlier in this same chapter, Tacitus was quick to remind us of the legionaries’ *insitam praedandi cupidinem* (“inborn desire to plunder,” 3.32.1).²⁷⁴ Thus, the historian implies that these legionaries were going to fulfill the promise of Primus’ and the other generals’ fateful point (*monstrassent*, 3.27.3) whether Primus ordered them to or not.

By now, it is evident that Primus (a) understands how to harness the natural impulses and pride of soldiers and to use them to further his cause (3.26.3-28.3), and (b) understands when it is best to sit back and let his soldiers do what they do best: plunder (3.32). But, effective though they are, such tactics come at the cost of many innocent lives. At the start of the campaign, when Primus sent his troops into the neighborhood of Cremona to start their career in plundering (3.15.1), they were willing to “drop their booty and fight” (*omissa praeda proelio occureret*, 3.16.2) when the situation necessitated. Back then, Primus’ strategy of destructive plunder (*raptor*), followed by allowing the soldiers to enrich themselves (*largitor*), did not interfere with

²⁷¹ Pace Wellesley (1972) 122, who hangs much on the speed of Primus’ departure to the baths (*propere petit*, 3.32.3): “The need for haste is not obvious unless, as T[acitus] probably implies, Antonius [Primus] despaired of controlling his men.”

²⁷² Cf. Manolaraki (2003) 177: “[Primus’] effective control [over his army] is largely contingent upon his ability to relate to mutinies and quasi-mutinies. His secret is, to put it glibly, that, instead of swimming against the current, he goes with the flow.”

²⁷³ For a lengthy discussion of how this passage has been variously construed, see Heubner (1972) 87-88.

²⁷⁴ Cf. *cupidine praedandi* (Liv. 33.19.4), cited by Heubner (1972) 87.

discipline, and thus did not interfere with his authority. Now, as Primus bathes, the plunder and carnage rage on unchecked:

non dignitas, non aetas protegebat, quo minus stupra caedibus, caedes stupris miscerentur. grandaevos senes, exacta aetate feminas, viles ad praedam, in ludibrium trahebant: ubi adulta virgo aut quis forma conspicuus incidisset, vi manibusque rapientium divolsus ipsos postremo direptores in mutuam perniciem agebat. dum pecuniam vel gravia auro templorum dona sibi quisque trahunt, maiore aliorum vi truncabantur. quidam obvia aspernati verberibus tormentisque dominorum abdita scrutari, defossa eruere. (3.33.1-2)

Neither rank nor age protected rape from sex crimes and murder from intermingling. They dragged off for sport old men and elderly women, who had no value as plunder: wherever an adult virgin or anyone who stood out for his beauty came in the soldiers' path, they were torn to pieces by the violent hands of rapists, ultimately driving the plunderers themselves to self-destruction. Whoever made off with their own sum of money or golden offerings taken from temples, was cut down violently at the hands of others. Some, spurning the more obvious loot, tried to find hidden treasures and dig up what was buried by beating and torturing the property owners.

viles ad praedam, in ludibrium trahebant is a doubly disturbing phrase: on the one hand, it reveals that the soldiers have become so gripped with greed that they have begun to assess the value of even the defenseless elderly in monetary terms; on the other hand, the phrase reveals that not even “objects” deemed to be of low value are safe from violent treatment. Primus' legions have no qualms about crossing the line from selfish greed to pure sadism, debauchery and chaos. The results are horrific: sexual misconduct (*adulta virgo...forma conspicuus*), sacrilege (*templorum*), and the unraveling of unit cohesion (*in mutuam perniciem; aliorum vi truncabantur*).²⁷⁵

The soldiers, it turns out, were motivated by “more than an inborn desire for plunder” (*praeter insitam praedandi cupidinem*, 3.32.1): Primus' formerly Othonian legions were nursing a grudge against the townsfolk (a) for allegedly supporting Vitellius in the war against Otho; (b)

²⁷⁵ These are traditional motifs in descriptions of sacked cities: cf. Sal. *Cat.* 51, with Wellesley (1972) 123. For a discussion of wartime rape in *H.* 3.33 and elsewhere, see Williams (2010) 112-16.

for mocking the Thirteenth Legion when it was garrisoned there previously; and (c) for giving the Vitellians food and other support (3.32.2). Tacitus caps the list of motives with an element of the mundane:²⁷⁶ the residents of Cremona were at that moment hosting several wealthy merchants within their walls.²⁷⁷ The gathering of merchants on market days is a routine activity of normal civilian life.²⁷⁸ Its occurrence at this time suggests that the Cremonese thought that they were safe, thus further highlighting the transgressive nature of attacking this Italian city. Furthermore, a scene of banal normality casts into even sharper relief the far-from-routine “monetary” activities of the Flavian plunderers and rapists. Tacitus comments further on the perversion of wartime commercial values when “Primus, ashamed of their crimes [*sc.* of raping and pillaging Cremona] and because of growing resentment, decreed that no one was to keep any citizen of Cremona prisoner. Agreement among the Italians, who as a bloc vehemently opposed the buying and selling of slaves acquired in this way, had rendered the soldiers’ booty useless (*inritamque praedam militibus*, 3.34.4).” The Flavian soldiers, not to be deterred, simply began killing their captives until their families and neighbors “bought them back in secret” (*occulte redemptabantur*, 3.34.2)! No commercial norm, whether civilian or military, is respected by the Flavian soldiers once the walls of Cremona are breached.

FLAVIANS AS BARBARIAN BOOGYEMEN

Silius Italicus’ account of the capture of Syracuse furnishes perhaps the most dramatic and laudatory example of Roman restraint in the face of an opportunity to plunder. In a detailed

²⁷⁶ Cf. Ash (1999) 66: “This item [i.e. the mention of the market in progress] is placed emphatically last in the list of motivating influences and adds weight to the passing comment with which Tacitus opened the discussion (‘quite apart from their natural desire for plundering,’ 3.32.1).”

²⁷⁷ *tempus quoque mercatus ditem alioqui coloniam maiore opum specie complebat* (“It was also market season and the colony, which was rich to begin with, was filled with the visible opulence” 3.32.2).

²⁷⁸ See Frayn (1993).

ecphrasis (Sil. 14.641-66), the poet describes the unrivalled wealth suddenly at Rome's disposal.²⁷⁹ Marcellus, hyper-aware of his own power to destroy (Sil 14.666-70), chooses rather to curb the soldiers' violence: "thus mercy to the conquered took the place of plunder, and the goddess of Victory, asking no more than victory, waved her wings unspotted by blood, in approval of herself" (*sic parcere victis / pro praeda fuit, et sese contenta nec ullo / sanguine pollutis plausit Victoria pennis*, Sil. 14.673-74).

Primus' allowance of, and even enticement towards, plunder clearly contradicts the sort of ideal Roman practice Marcellus represents.²⁸⁰ The tradition of Caesar at Pharsalus further demonstrates Primus' alignment with the darker side of Roman generalship. In his own *Bellum Civile*, where he often seeks to justify his own actions, Caesar orders his men not to allow themselves to be distracted by plunder (*BC* 3.97.1).²⁸¹ Similarly, in the *Annals*, Tacitus has Suetonius Paulinus exhort his legions before fighting Boudicca to "forget about plunder" (*praedae immemores*, A. 14.36.2).²⁸² In the *De bello civili* Lucan's Caesar offers up Pharsalus for plunder such that the poet's sinister characterization of the Roman icon clearly informs Tacitus' Primus:²⁸³

*non magno hortamine miles
in praedam ducendus erat: "victoria nobis
plena, viri," dixit, "superest pro sanguine merces,
quam monstrare meum est: neque enim donare vocabo,
quod sibi quisque dabit." (7.736-39)*

The soldiers needed no great encouragement to be led toward plunder: "Complete victory is ours, men," he said, "what remains is your reward for bloodshed, which falls to me to point out: for I will not call it "giving" what each man gives himself."

²⁷⁹ For ecphrases in the *Punica*, see Manuwald (2009).

²⁸⁰ Most of the examples cited in the paragraph are derived from Ash (1999) 37-38. Wellesley (1972) 121, citing Liv. 21.57.13-14 and 37.32.12-13: "Antonius [Primus] was seriously at fault in not talking stronger."

²⁸¹ Ps.-Caesar also describes himself as forbidding plundering at Hadrumentum ([Caes.] *BA* 3.1; cf. 54); see Ash (1999) 38.

²⁸² Adler (2011) 129 points out that Paulinus' instruction to refrain from violence is "essentially practical: the Roman troops can defeat the rebels more easily if they are not distracted by plunder."

²⁸³ This intertext has long been recognized; cf. Wellesley (1972) 115.

Primus also closely resembles Juba, the Numidian king who, according to pseudo-Caesar, “gave the town [of Vaga] over to his troops to be plundered and destroyed” (*dedisse oppidum diripiendum delendumque militibus*, [Caes.] *BA* 74.2).²⁸⁴

In this section, I will explore how Silius’ use of the verb *penso* expands our understanding of Primus’ dark and barbarous place in Tacitean historiography even further. It was noted above that the metaphorical language used by Tacitus for “weighing” (*pensabantur*, 3.26.3) the soldiers’ profits against their toils derives from the literal vocabulary of scales. *penso*, an Imperial Latin by-form of *pendo*, is not particularly well-attested in Tacitus’ day or earlier.²⁸⁵ So it is noteworthy that Silius Italicus, poet of the *Punica* and elder contemporary of Tacitus, uses *penso* several times—in both a literal and figurative sense—in reference to Hannibal, his Gallic allies in the Second Punic War, and their ancestors, the Senones Gauls, who sacked Rome in 390 BCE.²⁸⁶ This locus of intertextual engagement is not an idle one: in his “obituary” of Cremona, Tacitus notes that the city had been founded 286 years earlier, “at the time when Hannibal was menacing Italy, to serve as a fortification against the Gauls living north of the Po or any other violent invasion by way of the Alps. ... [B]ut a city which had been unscathed by foreign invasion proved unlucky in civil wars”²⁸⁷ (*ingruente in Italiam Annibale, propugnaculum adversus Gallos trans Padum agentes et si qua alia vis per Alpes rueret...bellis externis intacta*,²⁸⁸ *civilibus infelix*, 3.34.1). Primus and his Roman legions, in other words, destroyed a city which over the centuries had withstood Rome’s fiercest enemies.

²⁸⁴ Cited by Ash (1999) 159.

²⁸⁵ *TLL* x/1.1108.28-1109.30 cites, other than Tacitus and Silius Italicus, only Liv. 22.51.3, 30.32.5; Curt. 3.6.5, 7.8.2, 8.2.29; Pet. 132.6. The vast majority of cited passages postdate Tacitus.

²⁸⁶ Little work has been done on the relationship between Silius Italicus and Tacitus. For resonances of the Silian Hannibal in the complex portrayal of Germanicus in the *Annals*, see Augoustakis and Manolaraki (2012).

²⁸⁷ Translation by Wellesley (2009) 144.

²⁸⁸ According to Wellesley (1972) 125, *bellis externis intacta* refers to “the unsuccessful attack of the Boii and their allies under a Carthaginian leader on Cremona in 200 BC (Liv. 31.10 and 21), the invasion of the Cimbri halted at

It was Rhiannon Ash who first noticed the connection between the Flavians of Tacitus and the Carthaginians of Silius: the Hannibal of the *Punica* offers up the Roman-allied city of Saguntum as a sacrifice to his soldiers' greed in much the same way Primus offers up Cremona:²⁸⁹

*perque ipsos caedis cumulos stragemque iacentum
monstrabat furibundis iter cunctosque ciebat
nomine et in praedas stantem dabat improbus urbem* (Sil. 1.453-5)

The raging Hannibal pointed the way over the actual piles of corpses and heaps of the dead, calling all his soldiers by name and boldly offering them the city as booty, though it still stood. (trans. Ash (1999))

Romanae utrimque artes: pondera saxorum Vitelliani provolvunt, disiectam fluitantemque testudinem lanceis contisque scrutantur, donec soluta compage scutorum exangues aut laceros prosternerent multa cum strage. incesserat cunctatio, ni duces fesso militi et velut inritas exhortationes abnuerent Cremonam monstrassent. (H. 3.27.3)

Both sides employed Roman tactics: The Vitellians rolled heavy stones and then, when the Flavian *testudo* broke apart and wavered, they probed it with lances and pikes, until, now that the connections between the shields had been broken, they could lay the men flat, bloodied and wounded, with deadly slaughter. Hesitation would have set in, had not the generals pointed out Cremona to the soldiers, who were exhausted and refusing exhortations as if they were useless.

In both passages, a general offers the booty of an entire city to renew the fighting spirit of a slackening offensive. Livy has a comparable scene, on which Sil. 1.453-455 is likely based.²⁹⁰

the Campi raudii...in 101 BC, and perhaps the occupation of the Alpine regions, Raetia and Noricum, in the period 35 to 14 BC.”

²⁸⁹ Ash (1999) 63.

²⁹⁰ *Interim animos eorum nunc ira in hostes stimulando, nunc spe praemiorum accendit; ut vero pro contione praedam captae urbis edixit militum fore, adeo accensi omnes sunt ut, si extemplo signum datum esset, nulla vi resisti videretur posse* (“Meanwhile he kindled their spirits, now by inciting them to rage against their enemies, again by holding out hopes of rewards. But when he made a speech proclaiming that the spoils of the captured city should go to the soldiers, they were all so excited that if the signal had been given instantly, it seemed as if no force could have withstood them,” Liv. 21.11.3-4; trans. Foster (1929), adapted). See Ash (1999) 38.

But Tacitus' use of the pivotal verb *monstro* shows that he had the poet in mind more than the historian. Tacitus' passage, in fact, has an epic flavor overall: the phrase *soluta compage*, for instance, is an epic collocation.²⁹¹

Ash's larger argument is that Tacitus aligns the Vitellians and the Flavians with different barbarian boogymen of Rome's past: while the Flavians variously evoke the Hannibal of Livy and Silius, it is the barbarous ways of the *Vitellians*, not the Flavians, which evoke the Senones, the Gauls who sacked all of Rome except the Capitoline Hill in 390 BCE.²⁹² The Vitellians' arrival at Rome, for instance, follows the same pattern as Livy's Senones—wide-eyed tourism (*H.* 2.88.3; cf. Liv 5.41.4), followed by aimless wandering (*H.* 2.93.1; cf. Liv. 5.44.5), and finally falling victim to southern heat and diseases (*H.* 2.93.1 and 2.99.1; cf. Liv. 5.48.3).²⁹³ Yet, when we explore how Tacitus and Silius employ the verb *penso*, we find that *both* Hannibal *and* the Senones lurk behind the Cremona episode of the *Histories*. Indeed, Tacitus places Primus within a lineage of barbarian enemies of Rome—stretching back, through Hannibal, to the original terror from the north, the Senones.

Silius first makes use of *penso* during the battle of Saguntum, thus strengthening the *monstro* intertext discussed above. After Hannibal has offered the city to his soldiers as booty to embolden them (Sil. 1.453-55), the Carthaginian general kills the Saguntine warrior Murrus in single combat (Sil. 1.515-17). Enraged, the young men of Saguntum gang up on Hannibal, bringing him close to the breaking point (Sil. 1.518-32). Hannibal of course survives, and the poet offers the following explanation for the general's fortitude:

mente adversa domat gaudetque nitescere duris

²⁹¹ I owe this observation to Antony Augoustakis. Cf. Luc. *BC* 3.491, Sil. 17.606, and Stat. *Theb.* 8.31. On the metaphorical potential of *compages* in the *Histories*, cf. 4.74.3 with Master (2016) 139-40. Joseph (2012) 129-35 identifies *H.* 3.27 as participating in a network of epic, and especially Lucanian, allusiveness.

²⁹² See Ash (1999) 37-72, esp. 45-49 and 63-69.

²⁹³ Ash (1999) 45-48.

virtutem et decoris pretio discrimina pensat. (Sil. 1.533-534)

He overcomes disaster through courage and is delighted that his virtue is made brighter by hardship; and he weighs dangers against the reward of glory. (trans. Duff (1934))

The echoes with the “scales of war” before (3.26.3) and during (3.27.3-28) the battle at Cremona are striking. Silius’ account of Hannibal at Saguntum was likely a model for Primus at Cremona, which, if true, casts doubt on Primus’ claim to Roman identity. Yet whereas both generals “weigh” cost against benefit, the sentiment expressed by Silius is considerably nobler: Hannibal views *glory* as a worthy prize (*decoris pretio*, Sil. 1.534); Primus’ soldiers write off the rewards of glory as “worthless” (*inania*, 3.19.2), and instead put everything on the line for *plunder* (*aviditate praedae*, 3.26.3). Primus hardly protests (3.20.1, 31.1). Thus, in the lead-up to Cremona, Primus and his legions as a collective entity fall short of Silius’ Hannibal at Saguntum.²⁹⁴

pensat (Sil. 1.534), like *pensabantur* (H. 3.26.3), refers to “weighing” in a metaphorical sense (*OLD* s.v. 4).²⁹⁵ But, in several other passages of the *Punica*, Silius uses *penso* in its literal meaning (*OLD* s.v. 1), usually in reference to the physical scales used to weigh the indemnity Rome paid to the Senones Gauls after the humiliating sack at their hands in 390 BCE. Livy records the best known version of the story:²⁹⁶

pondera ab Gallis allata iniqua, et tribuno recusante additus ab insolente Gallo ponderi gladius, auditaque intoleranda Romanis vox, Vae victis. (Liv. 5.48.9)

The weights brought by the Gauls were dishonest, and when the tribune objected, the insolent Gaul added his sword to the weight, and a saying intolerable to Roman ears was heard: “Woe to the conquered!” (trans. Foster (1924), adapted)

²⁹⁴ Cf. Manolaraki and Augoustakis (2012) 400: “To acknowledge that Tacitus’ Germanicus is informed by Silius’ Hannibal is to overcome the limitations of the simplified typology Roman vs. Foreign and the unravel the complexities of both characters.” But whereas Germanicus is quite like Silius’ Hannibal, Primus falls short of even that non-Roman hero. For a further connection between Tacitus’ Flavians and Hannibal in the realm of “linguistic heterogeneity,” see Ash (1999) 69-70.

²⁹⁵ Cf. also *adversa secundis pensando* (“weighing adversity against success,” Liv. 27.40.2).

²⁹⁶ For the other versions of the legend, cf. D.H. 13.13 and Plut. *Cam.* 28, with Ogilvie (1965) 738.

It will be noted that the verb in question does not appear in Livy's account: Tacitus is not interested in alluding to the historical episode per se, but rather to the *representation* of the episode in the *Punica*.²⁹⁷ For instance, amid an ecphrasis of a Roman temple functioning as a Middle-Republican senate-house, we glimpse "the helmets of the Senones and the wicked sword which decided how much gold was weighed on the scale" (*hic galeae Senonum pensatique improbus auri / arbiter ensis inest*, Sil. 1.624). And again later in book 4, during the battle of the Ticinus, Crixus, a Gallic chieftain allied with Hannibal, boasted that he was descended from Brennus himself, and wishing to co-opt for himself the glory of his ancestors' capture of the Capitol, "in his madness sported on his shield boss the Celts weighing out the gold on the sacred summit of the Tarpeian rock" (*Tarpeioque iugo demens et vertice sacro / pensantes aurum Celtas umbone gerebat*, Sil. 4.152-153). In both of these passages, the allusion to the humiliating Roman defeat of 390 BCE hinges on *penso*.

Consider also how Hannibal, addressing the Romans, describes the Carthaginians' willingness to surpass their barbarian predecessors in cruelty:

*"...Tarpeios iterum scopulos praeruptaque saxa
scandatis licet et celsam migretis in arcem,
nullo iam capti vitam pensabit auro."
incensi dictis animi, et furor additus armis.* (Sil. 2.33-36)

"...Though you climb a second time up the steep cliffs of the Tarpeian rock and take refuge in your lofty citadel, you shall not again, when made prisoner, ransom your lives for any weight of gold." These words fired the courage of his troops and they fought with fresh fury. (trans. Duff (1934), adapted)

It is important to note that, once again, *penso* appears in the context of motivating troops to press on with their attack. This is not the only time the poet frames the Carthaginians' and Gauls' present achievements in terms of the Senones' ancient achievements. For instance, immediately

²⁹⁷ It is also possible that Tacitus wishes to allude to another non-extant account of the "vae victis" scene.

following the death of the Saguntine champion Murrus, Silius muses (in highly allusive language) that, if even one spear thrown at Hannibal had sunk in deeper, Rome's defeat at the hands of the Senones at the Allia River would have remained the most serious defeat in their history; since Hannibal survived the duel, however, the coming slaughter at Lake Trasimene in the present war (*Punica* 5) will set a new precedent (Sil. 1.535-47). Later, when Scipio kills Crixus, the Gaul who literally wore the events of 390 BCE on his person, Scipio is delighted to point out how much closer to Rome his ancestor Brennus had come to total victory (Sil. 4.286-88).

Tacitus, by using the verb *penso* in a pivotal way in his narration of Cremona's destruction, has tapped into the same rhetorical stream—either directly or indirectly; it cannot be known which—Silius tapped into in order to construct and explore multiple layers of barbarian identity simultaneously. The Senones lie at the source of the tradition, followed by Hannibal and the Carthaginians, and now *Roman* general Primus and his *Roman* legions. The Flavians of *Histories* 3 not only follow upon Hannibal and the Gauls, as the “obituary” of Cremona suggests (3.34.1), but *embody* those archenemies of Rome as they symbolically *reenact* their conquests. That the Flavian army proceeds from Cremona to participate in the burning of the Capitol makes its status as successor to the Senones especially apt—and perverse. In fact, to drive the connection home, Tacitus twice compares the burning of the Capitol in 69 CE explicitly to the Gauls' similar—but lesser—exploits of 390 BCE:

id facinus post conditam urbem luctuosissimum foedissimumque rei publicae populi Romani accidit, nullo externo hoste, propitiis, si per mores nostros liceret, deis, sedem Iovis Optimi Maximi, auspicato a maioribus pignus imperii conditam, quam non Porsenna dedita urbe neque Galli capta temerare potuissent, furore principum excindi. (3.72.1)

This was the most lamentable and appalling disaster to befall the state to befall the state of the Roman people since the foundation of the city. Although no foreign

enemy threatened, although the gods favored us as far as our failings permitted, the sanctuary of Jupiter Best and Greatest, solemnly founded by our fathers as a symbol of our great destiny—a temple which neither Porsenna on the surrender of the city nor the Gauls on its capture had been able to desecrate. (trans. Wellesley (2009))

captam olim a Gallis urbem, sed integra Iovis sede mansisse imperium: fatali nunc igne signum caelestis irae datum et possessionem rerum humanarum Transalpinis gentibus portendi superstitione vana Druidae canebant. (4.54.2)

[The Gallic rebels of 70 CE said that] the city was once captured by the Gauls, but Roman power had remained, since Jupiter’s seat had remained intact: now, the Druids prophesied in their vain superstition that the fateful fire [on the Capitol] was sign of divine wrath and that world empire for the peoples beyond the Alps was being foretold.

Just as Hannibal’s victory at Lake Trasimene superseded the Senones’ victory generations before along the Allia river (Sil. 1.535-47), so do Tacitus’ Flavians (together with the Vitellians) manage to burn the “seat of Jupiter” when even the Senones could not. Thus, the civil war combatants of book 3 take their place alongside the greatest barbarian boogymen in Roman history.

PART 2: The Non-Violence of Fabius Valens

Though often downplayed or overlooked by modern scholars,²⁹⁸ Fabius Valens, legionary legate in Lower Germany in 69 CE and loyal Vitellian partisan, plays an undeniably significant role in Tacitus’ larger narrative—even, in a sense, embodying the rise and fall of the Vitellian regime. The first character to speak (in indirect discourse) in the entire Vitellian narrative, Valens successfully convinces the complacent then-governor to want the throne for himself: *quatiebatur his segne ingenium, ut concupisceret magis quam ut speraret*, (“his lazy character was rocked by

²⁹⁸ In fact, Valens’ role in the *Histories* is almost never discussed at much length in Tacitean scholarship. Morgan (1994) and Ash (1999) are significant exceptions. Other studies which discuss discrete aspects of Tacitus’ characterization of Valens include Powell (1972), Morgan (1993), Manolaraki (2005).

these arguments, resulting in his desiring rather than hoping [to gain power],” 1.52.4).²⁹⁹ Then, after planting the seed of revolt, he nurtures it to fruition. When news reaches Vitellius in Cologne (in Lower Germany) that Caecina and the legions of Upper Germany have smashed Galba’s statues and sworn loyalty to the SPQR, it is Valens, “the biggest go-getter among the legates” (*promptissimus e legatis*, 1.57.1), who rides into Cologne from nearby Bonn and, with a retinue of legionary and auxiliary cavalry,³⁰⁰ “proclaims” (*consalutavit*) Vitellius emperor. Upper Germany follows suit the very next day, and thus the Vitellian challenge is born. As principle conceiver and creator of the Vitellian challenge, Valens fills much the same role for Vitellius that Mucianus fills for Vespasian. Much later in the *Histories*, when the Vitellian forces are on the ropes after having lost the Second Battle of Cremona, it is the capture of Valens which finally breaks the Vitellians’ backs: *capto Valente cuncta ad victoris opes conversa* (“with the capture of Valens, the entire Roman world turned to the victor’s position of strength,” 3.44). And when Valens is subsequently executed and his head put on public display, the Flavian army takes it as a sign that the end of the war is upon them (*ut finem belli*, 3.62.1).

At various points throughout this larger “Valens narrative,” the actions (and inactions) of Valens and his army add dimension to the role which plunder and bribery play in the relationships between commander and soldier. As such, Tacitus draws many implicit comparisons between Valens and the *raptor largitor* himself, Antonius Primus. These two military leaders find themselves in similar predicaments: both serve men who strive to become, and succeed in becoming, emperor; both march south through the Alps and into northern Italy; once in Italy, both engage their civil-war enemy in a battle outside the city of Cremona; and,

²⁹⁹ *Segnitia* (“laziness”) is one of Vitellius’ most prominent and consistent characteristics; cf. 1.62.2; 2.73, 90.1, 94.2; 3.55.1, 56.2, 86.1.

³⁰⁰ Morgan (1994) 104 points out that this combination of cavalry types represents both native and Rome support—a clever PR stunt to visually convey the depth and diversity of support for Vitellius.

most significantly, in order to accomplish their goals and achieve victory for themselves and their masters, both must contend with the outsized demands and cravings of the soldiers they command. Indeed, Valens' army possesses all those qualities typical of Tacitus' 69 CE narrative: they are simultaneously lazy *and* ambitious, obsessed with fairness (when it suits them), restless, fractious, prone to violence, and above all *greedy*.³⁰¹ Yet there is a key difference in how the two commanders handle their soldiers' impulses. Primus, as we have seen, uses the soldiers' "desire for plunder" (*aviditate praedae*, 3.26.3) to his advantage, offering his men the opportunity to pillage an entire city as compensation for the losses sustained in taking the nearby Vitellian camp. Many innocents (the elderly, the young) are killed at Cremona to satisfy the soldiers' immoderate urges, and Primus does nothing to stop it (3.32-33). Valens too commands an army bursting with violent and acquisitive energy; but, unlike his Flavian counterpart, he does not offer up cities to plunder. As we will see, the Vitellian commander, in order to limit the deaths of innocents, improvises a system whereby he extorts money from the Gallic cities which they meet on the march rather than seize those cities by force. Tacitus' "message" about whose strategy is "correct" is far from clear-cut. On the one hand, Valens' attempt during the march south through Gaul to steer his men away from their propensity to commit violence is largely successful: many innocent lives are saved as a result of his clever leadership.³⁰² On the other hand, by taking bribes rather than destroying cities, Valens garners a reputation among his men for avarice, and suffers a near-fatal mutiny as a result.

³⁰¹ For the most important passages in the repetitious characterization of armies in the *Histories* as greedy, see pp. 106-9 above.

³⁰² Caecina, Vitellius' other legate and ally who marched south parallel with Valens, took far less concern with the lives of the innocent; cf. 1.67-70 and Morgan (1994).

VALENS' IMPOSSIBLE CHALLENGE

Gwyn Morgan, one of the very few scholars to pay the figure of Valens any considerable attention, argues that “[i]n his account of Valens’ march Tacitus describes a situation in which the commander loses control, first over his men, then over himself.”³⁰³ Rhiannon Ash agrees: “...the column which advances on Rome under Valens becomes progressively less disciplined as the march continues.”³⁰⁴ While it is true that Valens’ reputation is in some ways permanently tarnished by the time he reaches the Alps, I argue that Valens, rather than *lose* control, in fact *gains* a good deal of control over his men. Though this control is tenuous and his methods morally suspect, Valens largely manages to keep the violent plunder of Rome’s allies at bay. Thus, Tacitus depicts in the character of Valens an alternative strategy to the Flavian army of Antonius Primus, the most brutal *raptor* of the *Histories*. However, Tacitus is not in the business of constructing simple antitheses between moral heroes and immoral villains. Valens may eschew violence, but in the process he creates a military culture which condones—even promotes—other forms greed, luxury, and licentiousness. In other words, he is no less of a *largitor*. Furthermore, by protecting innocent civilians from slaughter, he sows the seeds of future internal conflict.

Any complexity of character in Tacitus’ Valens appears to be an innovation, for the Valens of the extant parallel tradition, when mentioned at all, is one-dimensional and lacking in detail. There is one brief mention in Plutarch’s *Life of Otho*, where he is described as an insatiable plunderer of the enemy who also stole and received gifts from allies:

Φάβιον δὲ Οὐάλεντα τὸν ἕτερον στρατηγὸν οὔτε ἀρπαγαὶ πολεμίων οὔτε κλοπαὶ καὶ δωροδοκίαι παρὰ συμμάχων ἐνεπίμπλασαν χρηματιζόμενον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐδόκει διὰ τοῦτο βραδέως ὀδεύων ὑστερεῖν τῆς προτέρας μάχης. (Plu. *Otho* 6.4)

³⁰³ Morgan (1994) 107-10.

³⁰⁴ Ash (1999) 39.

Fabius Valens, the other general, was so rapacious that neither what he plundered from the enemy nor what he stole or received as gifts from the allies could satisfy him. In fact it is believed that this was why he arrived too late to the battle at Placentia. (trans. Rouse (1926), adapted)

Cassius Dio's assessment that Valens collected money "by every means" (ἐξ ἅπαντος τρόπου, Cass. Dio 63.10.1) supports Plutarch's portrait. Tacitus' Valens, on the other hand, proves to be considerably more complex: while certainly an eager fundraiser, he does not start out that way, and only becomes so out of necessity.

Tacitus' exploration of the *initia causaeque* ("initial phases and causes") of the Vitellian challenge contains a careful analysis of the soldiers' thought-patterns:

...ferox praeda gloriaque exercitus, ut cui sine labore ac periculo ditissimi belli victoria evenisset, expeditionem et aciem, praemia quam stipendia malebat.
(1.51.1)

...wild with plunder and glory, since victory in a highly profitable war [sc. against Julius Vindex] had been achieved, the army preferred the reward of campaigns and battles over regular payment.

Their appetitive desire has two objects, *praeda* ("plunder") and *gloria* ("glory"). Tacitus, moreover, defines precisely what he means by *praeda*: *praemia*, as well as the two nouns in apposition to it, *expeditionem* ("campaign") and *aciem* ("battle"), all together constitute a nimble conflation of the two related senses of *praeda* discussed above: "booty (taken in war, robbery, or sim. circumstances), plunder, spoil, loot" (*OLD* s.v. 1a) and "the act or practice of plundering, spoliation, pillage" (*OLD* s.v. 1c).³⁰⁵ The precision of Tacitus' language here leaves little doubt that a passion for violence per se lies at the core of their appetitive desires. These soldiers, like Primus' Flavians, will not be content to collect their wealth passively; they want to earn it by fighting on campaign. The most dramatic example of the soldiers' desire for *praeda* (*OLD* s.v.

³⁰⁵ See p. 103 above.

1c) comes when, amid various contributions to the nascent war effort, the rank-and-file donate even their modest travel stipends and adornments “due to external pressures, internal urges, and greed” (*instinctu et impetu et avaritia*, 1.57.2). The final ablative, *avaritia*, is charged with meaning:³⁰⁶ the soldiers craved wealth won through conquest so much that they were willing to part with what little wealth they had in order to make that happen. The message is clear: it is not wealth per se they want; they want *to* plunder.

Vitellius, however, in the lead-up to the march south from Lower Germany to Italy, issues orders to Valens at odds with the soldiers’ violent brand of *avaritia*:

Fabius Valens adlicere vel, si abnuerent, vastare Gallias et Cottanis Alpibus Italiam inrumpere, Caecina proprio transitu Poeninis iugis degedi iussus. (1.61.1)

Fabius Valens received orders to win over the Gauls to their side or, if they refused, to crush them, and to burst into Italy by way of the Cottian Alps; Caecina was ordered to descend through the Pennine pass by a shorter route.

This passage is key to understanding Valens’ behavior on the march (1.63-67).³⁰⁷ In effect, Vitellius’ orders are to use violence against the native inhabitants *only as necessary*—orders which, as we will see, Valens does his best to follow. Valens’ obedience is not surprising; in spite of all his failings and flaws, Tacitus repeatedly emphasizes Valens’ loyalty to Vitellius. Whereas Caecina betrays Vitellius by an unsuccessful defection to the Flavian camp (3.13-14), Valens remains loyal to the end of his life. When another seemingly loyal Vitellian, Marius Maturus, jumps ship after the Second Battle of Cremona, Valens stays the course (3.42-43).³⁰⁸ In

³⁰⁶ Cf. Damon (2003) 219: “the vagueness of *instinctu* and *impetu*...sets *avaritia*, which is both precise and cynical, into relief.”

³⁰⁷ To my knowledge, the importance of this passage has not been previously recognized. The commentaries of Chilver (1979) and Damon (2003) are silent on this passage.

³⁰⁸ Tacitus expresses Marius Maturus’ betrayal in the language of oaths: [*Maturus*] *fidus Vitellio, cuius sacramentum cunctis circa hostilibus nondum exuerat* (“[Maturus] was loyal to Vitellius, whose oath of allegiance he had not yet cast off even with all the enemies around,” 3.42.2); *Maturo ceterisque remanere et in verba Vespasiani adigi volentibus fuit* (“Maturus and the others wanted to stay and be sworn into allegiance with Vespasian,” 3.43.2). Such oath language may allude to the beginning of Vitellius’ reign, when the *sacramentum*

an obituary otherwise full of salacious reproaches,³⁰⁹ Tacitus writes that the lieutenant was “loyal to Vitellius and respectable in light of others’ treachery” (*Vitellio fidus et aliorum perfidia inlustratus*, 3.62.2).³¹⁰ On the issue of loyalty, then, Valens stands diametrically opposed to Primus, who, when himself presented with orders from his soon-to-be emperor to pursue a bloodless strategy, selfishly pursues violence nonetheless (3.8).

Valens’ obedience and loyalty notwithstanding, several circumstances, enumerated by Tacitus, threaten to make a non-violent march difficult. First, while these German soldiers have traditionally been inured to strict commanders and few rewards, discipline has recently been relaxed (1.51.2). Second, because of their recent conflict with the pro-Galban Gauls, the men have grown to despise some of their neighbors to the west, even regarding them as *hostes*. Some anti-Galban Gallic tribesmen in the Rhineland cohorts stand ready to capitalize on this prejudice whenever possible (1.51.3-4). Third, though the legions of Upper and Lower Germany were historically separated from each other, the war against Vindex has brought them together into a single German force—a force which day by day becomes more aware of its own strength and shared identity (1.51.5). In short, Tacitus methodically shows that, in the early days of 69 CE, the

would have been first taken. If so, Tacitus comments implicitly on the longevity of Valens’ loyalty, for it was Valens who first saluted Vitellius emperor (1.57.1).

³⁰⁹ I reproduce the obituary here in full, with translation: *natus erat Valens Anagninae equestri familia. procax moribus neque absurdus ingenio famam urbanitatis per lasciviam petere. ludicro Iuvenalium sub Nerone velut ex necessitate, mox sponte mimos actitavit, scite magis quam probe. legatus legionis et fovit Verginium et infamavit; Fonteium Capitonem corruptum, seu quia corrumpere nequiverat, interfecit: Galbae proditor, Vitellio fidus et aliorum perfidia inlustratus*. (“Valens was born in Anagnia to an equestrian family. Wanton in his ways, but not lacking in talent, he sought a reputation for urbanity through lewd behavior. Under Nero he played a part in a mime-play—at first as if under duress, but soon willingly—with more skill than decorum. As legionary legate he both supported Verginius and dragged his name through the gutter; he killed Fonteius Capito because he was corrupt, or perhaps because *he* couldn’t corrupt *him*. Galba’s betrayer, loyal to Vitellius and respectable in light of others’ treachery,” 3.62.2). Cf. Pomeroy (1991) 204: “it is Valens’ final, and fatal loyalty to Vitellius which makes up for the shadows in the rest of his career.”

³¹⁰ Tacitus had expressed the same sentiment on the heels of Caecina’s betrayal: *et fidus Vitellio Fabius nec militiae ignarus* (“and Fabius [Valens] was loyal to Vitellius and not ignorant of military matters,” 3.15).

region has become a powder keg, and that, should Vitellius' armies go trekking through, they are sure to provide the perfect spark.

After so much talk about the soldiers' greed in the explanation of causes (1.51), when the campaign finally begins, Tacitus surprisingly pushes not *praeda* and *avaritia*, but *furor* ("madness") and *rabies* ("frenzy") to the fore:

Divoduri (Mediomatricorum id oppidum est) quamquam omni comitate exceptos subitus pavor terruit, raptis repente armis ad caedem innoxiae civitatis, non ob praedam aut spoliandi cupidine, sed furore et rabie et causis incertis eoque difficilioribus remediis, donec precibus ducis mitigati ab excidio civitatis temperavere; caesa tamen ad quattuor milia hominum. (1.63.1)

At Divodurum (the town of the Mediomatrici),³¹¹ though welcomed with complete friendliness, the men, seized with a sudden terror, suddenly took up arms to slaughter innocent citizens, not for plunder or out of a desire for looting, but because of madness and frenzy and reasons uncertain and thus difficult to remedy, until, soothed by the entreaties of their general they left off destroying the town—not before 4,000 people were killed, however.

Eleni Manolaraki has observed that Tacitus generally seems to find it either insufficient or unsatisfying to rely too heavily on madness as a motive.³¹² On those few occasions where Tacitus does suggest *furor* as a motive, he tends also to qualify or contextualize it. In this passage, Tacitus' alignment of madness with the unexplainable speaks to his distrust of those who would employ *furor* as a motive of convention and convenience. Hence, this invocation of *furor* must be seriously considered. A random spasm of mass slaughter at the very start of a campaign in which violence was to be eschewed if possible (1.61.1) shows, if nothing else, the difficulty of the task which lies ahead for Valens. It is important to note that Tacitus vests Valens with no role whatsoever in the violence. This suggests that the troops acted alone. Valens, as of

³¹¹ Modern Metz.

³¹² See Manolaraki (2003) 68-93, esp. 74-75. On the *furor* at Divodurum as a prelude to the Flavian *furor* at the Capitolium (3.71.1), see Master (2016) 64.

yet, has only the most tenuous control over his army, and must rely on supplications (*precibus*) rather than issuing orders.³¹³

Soon, however, Valens discovers an effective middle path to asserting control between pleading and commanding: bribery.³¹⁴ Upon reaching Lugdunum (Lyons), the citizens appeal to Valens' men to destroy their long-time rivals, the pro-Galban city of Vienna (Vienne), by invoking the riches to be gained there. This is surely the soldiers' dream: plunder *and* a chance to kill Galban *hostes* at the same time! Valens and the people of Vienna happen to have the same objective: that no harm come to the city. The citizens of Vienna pacify the soldiers by offering supplicatory gifts such as *velamenta* ("olive branches wrapped in woolen fillets") and *infulae* ("headbands"),³¹⁵ and "by grasping soldiers' weapons, knees and feet, they swayed the soldiers' hearts" (*arma genua vestigia prensando flexere militum animos*, 1.66.1). Lastly, adds Tacitus, Valens "chipped in by giving 300 sesterces to each man" (*addidit Valens trecentos singulis militibus sestertios*, 1.66.1). Valens' offered bribe, the last item on the list, strikes a monetary note. We may recall that a similar formulation was used when Tacitus describes why the common soldiers donated their own money and possession to the war effort: *instinctu et impetu et avaritia* ("due to external pressures, internal urges, and greed," 1.57.2).³¹⁶ By ending these "lists" at 1.66.1 and 1.57.2 on notes of bribery and greed, respectively, Tacitus engages in the subtle yet deliberate darkening of his narrative. For nearly a century, scholars have periodically

³¹³ For a discussion of the role of supplication in Tacitus' *Histories*, see Manolaraki (2003) 93-99.

³¹⁴ Even before the bribery of 1.66, Valens had shown signs of growing competence. He had settled a squabble between the Batavian auxiliaries and the legionaries by punishing a select few and reminding them of his own authority (1.64). Whereas Morgan (1994) 109 suggests that the punishment of "only a few" (*paucorum*) "may be another subtle hit at Valens," punishing only a few ringleaders and thus setting an example for all has good Roman precedent among the most effective generals. For instance, after the mutiny at Sucro during the Second Punic War, which in many ways is the *locus classicus* of Roman mutinies, Livy 28.29 tells us that Scipio only punished the ringleaders; see Chrissanthos (1999).

³¹⁵ *velamenta et infulae* are the typical accoutrements of Roman suppliants. Damon (2003) 234 notes that the collocation is standard, particularly in Livy; cf. *H.* 3.31.2 and *Liv.* 25.25.6, 30.36.4, 37.28.1.

³¹⁶ See pp. 124-25 above.

taken up the question of how we ought to read Tacitus' presentations of alternative explanations, and have repeatedly observed that in such passages the item listed last tends to be darker in tone.³¹⁷ Damon, explicitly citing 1.66.1 and 1.57.2, observes that lists in Tacitus tend to "conclude on a pragmatic (and sometimes morally dubious) note."³¹⁸ We can take matters a step further by noting that in the *Histories* the pragmatism of the final item is often money related.³¹⁹ Tacitus, merely by repeating the same motif over and over again in the same rhetorical structure known as the "loaded alternative," subtly implies that the desire for money is driving events. Once the tone of the scene has been darkened by Valens' bribe, the ensuing platitudes and dignified language assume a bitter, sneering tone:

tum vetustas dignitasque coloniae valuit et verba Fabi salutem incolumitatemque Viennensium commendantis aequis auribus accepta. (1.66.1)

Then, the antiquity and dignity of the colony began to hold sway and the words of Fabius Valens recommending the safety and security fell on receptive ears.

The 300 sesterces put the lie to these lofty sentiments; greed lies behind the army's restraint.

Valens has managed, since that first ugly incident at Divodurum (1.63.1), to stay loyal to Vitellius' directives (1.61.1). That is to say, he has succeeded in attracting the native Gallic population to his side without an outbreak of violence. The citizens of Vienna understood the danger they faced if they did not supplicate themselves to the soldiers (*haud ignari discriminis sui Viennenses*, 1.66.1), so they did. The soldiers, though deprived of the opportunity to plunder, still got paid, and Vienna was spared.

³¹⁷ Ryberg (1942); Sullivan (1976) 319, 324; Whitehead (1979) 476. The usefulness of such studies have their limitations, since they tend to emphasize the codification of different types of alternatives, rather than seek to understand any literary or historical reasons motivating the patterns.

³¹⁸ Damon (2003) 219, 324.

³¹⁹ This pattern is evidenced again at 2.28.2-29.3 (see below).

Yet Valens' decision to sidestep plunder does considerable harm to his reputation among his own men. 300 sesterces, the amount Valens "chipped in" (*addidit*, 1.66.1) to each man to head off violence, was one-third of a soldier's annual salary,³²⁰ a huge sum to stop the assault on only one of a dozen Gallic cities between Divodurum and Italy. Such lavishness breeds suspicion: next we learn of a rumor among the men that Valens had been bought off by the citizens of Vienna (*fama constans fuit ipsum Valentem magna pecunia emptum*, 1.66.1). How else, the text implies, could Valens have afforded the bribe? The soldiers are apparently unaware of their hypocrisy—or simply have no shame: Valens has bribed them to stay their hand, but they despise the thought of their commander having accepted the same arrangement!

Despite the hypocrisy, the end of the march narrative confirms for Tacitus' audience that the soldiers' suspicions of Valens having been "bought" were correct. When considered alongside the events at Vienna (1.66.1), the following passage gives the overall impression of a general who has set himself up as the conduit through which illicitly-gained monies flow from intimidated Gauls to greedy soldiers—but primarily, if not exclusively, concerned with enriching himself in the process:

is sordidus, repente dives mutationem fortunae male tegebat, accensis egestate longa cupidinibus immoderatus et inopi iuventa senex prodigus. lento deinde agmine per fines Allobrogum ac Vocontiorum ductus exercitus, ipsa itinerum spatia et stativorum mutationes venditante duce, foedis pactionibus adversus possessores agrorum et magistratus civitatum, adeo miniciter, ut Luco (municipium id Vocontiorum est) faces admoverit, donec pecunia mitigaretur. quotiens pecuniae materia deesset, stupris et adulteriis exorabatur. sic ad Alpes perventum. (1.66.2)

He, a lowly man suddenly rich, did a poor job disguising his change of fortune; he was immoderate in his passions, which had been inflamed by long poverty, and after a disadvantaged youth, a prodigal old age. He led his army to the borders of the Allobroges and Vocontii on a slow march, putting up for sale where and for how long they stopped, making treaties with the cities' farm-holders and

³²⁰ This is the figure provided by Damon (2003) 219, who cites Alston (1994). Chilver (1979) 127 offers more detail: "300 HS a man, if the *auxilia* were included (but perhaps they got less), required at least 12 m[illion] HS. For the legionaries it would mean a third of their annual pay."

magistrates, threatening to such a degree that he would put Lucum (the town of the Vocontii) to the torch, until they placate him with money. Whenever money was not available, he was placated by sexual favors and adultery. In this way they proceeded to the Alps.

Despite the obviously deplorable moral character on display (e.g., *stupris et adulteris*), *praeda* in its violent sense—i.e., “the act or practice of plundering, spoliation, pillage.” (*OLD* s.v. 1c)—is in fact avoided until the Alps are reached. The combination of *admoverit* and *donec* suggest that the torches *approached* but never touched Lucus Augusti. Indeed, there is nothing in the literary or archaeological record to indicate that the town was destroyed or damaged at this time.³²¹ Valens’ soldiers only *threaten* destruction until (*donec*) they are paid off. Conversely, at Cremona, Primus’ legionaries throw torches into homes and temples purely “for the fun of it” (*per lasciviam*, 3.33.2)—a motivation which more closely resembles Valens’ soldiers’ violence *furor et rabie et causis incertis* before Valens had begun to assert any semblance of control (1.63.1).³²² But now, at the end of the march, Valens has managed to stifle the more purely violent impulses of his soldiers, and thus has deviated from the sort of violence that Antonius Primus will embrace at Cremona.

Valens’ evasion of violence has mixed results. On the one hand, nothing more is mentioned of plunder, slaughter or the threat of slaughter. In other words, after Divodurum there is nothing like the sack of Cremona under Valens’ watch. Valens sets up a system wherein he and the army enrich themselves without the need to kill or plunder. The first sentence of 1.67, the beginning of the parallel narrative of Caecina’s march to the Alps along an alternate route through the northern provinces (1.67-70), drives this point home: “Caecina drank in more plunder and blood [*sc.* than Valens]” (*plus praedae ac sanguinis Caecina hausit*, 1.67.1). Though

³²¹ Unfortunately, our knowledge of Lucus Augusti (Luc-en-Diois) is sparse overall. For the surviving record of Lucus Augusti, see Plin. *HN* 3.36.

³²² See p. 127 above.

Vitellius' orders to Valens at 1.61.1 to "entice" the Gauls (*adlicere*) are, by the end of Valens' march, carried out by means of intimidation (*miniciter*, 1.66.2), his further orders not to "destroy" (*vastare*) Gallic communities are followed with admirable strictness. On the other hand, Valens' self-enrichment in the process provokes the enduring ire and suspicion of his men, which compromises his ability to prevent the violation of innocents later in the war: In the aftermath of victory in the First Battle of Cremona,³²³ Valens' forces participate in the rape and pillage of the Italian countryside, as the commander "was infamous on account of his profits and acquisitions and therefore turned a blind eye to the transgressions of others" (*Valens ob lucra et quaestus infamis eoque alienae etiam culpa dissimulator*, 2.56.2).

MUTINY AGAINST VALENS

The common soldiers' resentment of their commander's personal wealth compromises his long-term ability to maintain order in the ranks. On the eve of the First Battle of Cremona, Valens suffers a mutiny:

quod ubi auditum volgatumque, maerere socii, fremere legiones. [28.2] orbari se fortissimorum virorum auxilio; veteres illos et tot bellorum victores, postquam in conspectu sit hostis, velut ex acie abducti. si provincia urbe et salute imperii potior sit, omnes illuc sequerentur; sin victoriae columen in Italia veteretur, non abrumpendos ut corpori validissimos artus.

[29.1] *haec ferociter iactando, postquam immissis lictoribus Valens coercere seditionem coeptabat, ipsum invadunt, saxa iaciunt, fugientem sequuntur. spolia Galliarum et Viennensium aurum, pretia laborum suorum, occultare clamitantes, direptis sarcinis tabernacula ducis ipsamque humum pilis et lanceis rimabantur. nam Valens servili veste apud decurionem equitum tegebatur. ... [29.3] ille utili moderatione non supplicium cuiusquam poposcit, ac ne dissimulans suspectior foret, paucos incusavit, gnarus civilibus bellis plus militibus quam ducibus licere. (2.28.1-29.3)*

When this was heard and was made common knowledge, the allies became morose and the legions complained. [28.2] They said that they had been deprived of the aid

³²³ Not to be confused with the Second Battle of Cremona, discussed earlier in this chapter, in which the victorious Flavians sack and plunder the Vitellians.

of the strongest men; those famed veterans who had won so many battles, after the enemy came into view, had virtually been sent away from the front lines. If a province is more important than the City and the empire's safety, then let everyone follow them; but if the security of Italy hinges on victory, the most powerful limbs ought not to be rent from the body, so to speak.

[29.1] Having made these menacing statements, after Valens sent in his lictors to try to break up the mutiny, they attacked him, threw rocks at him and chased him as he fled. Claiming that he had hidden Gallic loot and Viennese gold, the rewards for their own labor, they ripped his luggage apart, ransacked the general's tent, and poked at the very ground with spears and lances. For Valens, dressed in slave-clothes, was hiding in a cavalry decurion's tent. ... [29.3] Practical and moderate, he did not demand anyone's execution, but lest he be suspected disingenuous, he chastised a few men, aware as he was that in civil wars soldiers have more leeway than generals.

Tacitus, once again by naming economic dissatisfaction last and thereby highlighting it, puts the lie to all nobler motivations.³²⁴ A dissection of the soldiers' own arguments and allegations will demonstrate this: before the mutiny begins (2.28), the legionaries allege anger (a) because the Batavians have been sent away; (b) because the loss of their best fighting men will downgrade their effectiveness as a fighting force; and (c) because Italy will be less safe as a result. In short, they take exception seemingly to everything *not* related to money. But when the mutiny begins (2.29), a totally unrelated—and much more plausible—motivation is alleged: that (d) Valens was hoarding and depriving the men of the just rewards for their labors (*spolia Galliarum et Viennensium aurum, pretia laborum suorum*). The contrast between the well-reasoned rhetorical argument made beforehand (a, b, c) and the money-grab made in the heat of the moment (d) comes across as a contrast between convenient pretext and true motive, respectively. The jealousy and greed of the army, it turns out, is at the core of Tacitus' mutiny narrative.

The prodding and digging at the soil with the weapons of war (*pilis et lanceis*, 2.29.1) is evocative of battle and, I would argue, signifies an attempt by the soldiers to fulfill their desires

³²⁴ Cf. 1.57.2, 66.1.

for the sort of violent plunder (*OLD* s.v. *praeda* 1c) they have been denied.³²⁵ Ash astutely observes that *laborum* seems boastful, since the troops have not yet fought in a proper battle.³²⁶ Yet the troops are in the *mindset* of a battle all the same, seemingly determined to play out the dramatic scenarios of Tacitean civil warfare regardless of observable reality. Indeed, in the absence of actual enemies, the soldiers have turned their pent-up aggression on the dirt, literally, and on Valens' greed more figuratively. The sort of calculation implicit in *pretia laborum suorum* ("rewards for their efforts") anticipates the calculation of Antonius Primus' army as they engage in *actual* battle (3.26-28). Antonius Primus, as we saw in PART 1 above, recognizes the lengths to which his soldiers would go to fulfill their desire for plunder (*aviditate praedae*, 3.26.3), and harnesses that desire in order to toward achieving victory over the Vitellians. Valens, on the other hand, fails to treat his soldiers' desire to plunder with sufficient seriousness, instead acquiring the *spolia Galliarum et Viennensium aurum* in a series of suspect under-the-table deals. and suffers a mutiny as a result. The violent side of greed, Tacitus suggests, is a strong motivator for the civil-war soldier; the commander who seeks to channel rather than stifle it puts himself in a better position for success. The successes and failures of Valens in books 1 and 2 prime the reader to better understand—if not approve of—the "scales of war" which cause the Flavian commanders to sacrifice Cremona on the altar of their soldiers' greed.

It is no coincidence that the digging language of this mutiny scene anticipates nearly verbatim the Vitellians' defense of their camp outside Cremona. In both cases, it is the Vitellians who are doing the poking and prodding, though to very different effects:

...ipsamque humum *pilis et lanceis rimabantur*... (2.29.1)

³²⁵ Ash (2007) 154 calls the soldiers' actions a "vivid misappropriation of the weapons of war," and notes that "[s]ince the camp was struck each day on the march, burying the gold under or near the commander's tent would not have been especially practical."

³²⁶ Ash (2007) 154.

...They were probing the ground itself with lances and pikes...

Romanae utrimque artes: pondera saxorum Vitelliani provolunt, disiectam fluitantemque testudinem lanceis contisque scrutantur... (3.27.3).

Both sides were using Roman tactics: the Vitellians rolled down heavy rocks, and prodded at a scattered and wavering *testudo* with lances and pikes...³²⁷

In the passage from book 2, the Vitellian soldiers are the acquisitive party, desperately searching for the wealth they believe is rightfully theirs. In the passage from book 3, the same Vitellians, now besieged, adapt their earlier wealth-seeking tactics in an effort to defend themselves against the greedy Flavians. Yet the Vitellians can no more vanquish the Flavians' *testudo* than they could the dirt. It is significant that this intratextual reference in book 3 comes *immediately* before Primus and the other generals "point" (*monstrassent*, 3.27.3) to Cremona: at the very moment Tacitus reveals the ability and willingness of the Flavian commanders to exploit the avarice of its soldiers, he reminds us of the moment when Valens was nearly the victim of his own soldiers' avarice. Greed, implies Tacitus, though an effective weapon when harnessed properly, nevertheless threatens the stability of military order and authority.

A passage found in the epitome of Cassius Dio, which has evident resonances with *Histories* 2.29, lends insight into Tacitus' efforts to shape the character of Valens to serve his own narrative purpose:

Ὅτι ὁ Οὐάλης οὕτω περὶ τὰ χρήματα ἐσπούδαζεν καὶ οὕτως ἐξ ἅπαντος τρόπου ἡθροίζεν ὥστε καὶ τὸν δέκαρχον τὸν κατακρύψαντά τε αὐτὸν καὶ διασώσαντα ἀποσφάζει διὰ χιλίας δραχμῶν, ἃς ἐκ τῶν σκευῶν αὐτοῦ ὑψηρῆσθαι ἔδοξεν. (Cass. Dio 63.10)

Valens was so eager for money and collected it so assiduously that he even put to death the decurion who had concealed him and had saved his life—all because of a thousand denarii which he thought had been stolen from his baggage. (trans. Cary (1925), adapted)

³²⁷ Translation adapted from Wellesley (2009).

Many elements of Cassius Dio's brief account find parallel in Tacitus' account of the Valens mutiny—e.g., the involvement of a decurion, the presence of luggage, and the motif of concealment (underlined above). Thus, both Tacitus and Cassius Dio seem to have preserved several of the components which they likely inherited from a shared common source or sources.³²⁸ Yet the point of Tacitus' scene differs from Cassius Dio's considerably. Given Tacitus' uniqueness among our sources in imbuing Valens with a consequential role in the narrative, I posit that Tacitus shifts the greed which he found in his original source material—and which Dio faithfully reproduced—from Valens to his army.³²⁹ In Tacitus' version, Valens is the *victim* of others' greed. But he is also a victim of his own making: it was Valens who had turned the campaign through Gaul into a cash-grab, so it makes sense that his men, now without any Gauls to extort, would set their sights on him. Though Valens manages to survive the mutiny and regain control of his army, the degree to which he must debase himself to do so—i.e. by putting on slave clothes and hiding (2.29.1)—underscores how precarious his position as a leader has become.

Valens is a complex foil for Primus. His cleverness and determination to prevent violence and plunder amplifies Primus' ruthlessness and willingness to commit violence by contrast. The fact that Valens ultimately fails to exert much influence either over his own soldiers or over the

³²⁸ Many have subscribed to the theory that the accounts of Tacitus, Suetonius, Dio and Plutarch all derive from the same "common source." For a defense of the theory, see Martin (1981) 189-98. For a skeptical view: Syme (1958) 272-74. Powell (1972) 834-36 and Chilver (1979) 26-30 provide good summaries. For Tacitus' engagement with his sources in the *Annals*, see most recently Potter (2012) 125-40.

³²⁹ It is also possible that Dio's and Tacitus' accounts both exist in some form in the common source(s). However, given the number of similarities in plot and theme, I believe that some form of adaptation is likely to have taken place.

course of the war suggests that his non-violent tactics, though effective to a point, were no match for the prevailing tone of violence and chaos in 69 CE.

PART 3: To Horrific Victory

In several ways, the sack of Cremona constitutes the turning point in the Flavian war effort.³³⁰ First, and most obviously, it marks the decline of Vitellian power and, in retrospect, proves to be the decisive battle of the Vitellio-Flavian War (though loyalty to Vitellius persists even after the emperor's death, as discussed in Chapter 4). Second, the battle's immediate aftermath brings into question the morality and sustainability of Primus' *raptor largitor* approach. As discussed above, Tacitus' charged rhetoric of urban destruction rendered the Flavian legions grotesque, little different from—and certainly no better than—Rome's most storied enemies of yore (e.g., Hannibal and Gallic Senones). Even Primus himself, who bathed while Cremona burned, when confronted with city's ground still putrid with gore (3.35.1), was "ashamed of their own criminality, even as resentment against [the Flavians] began to mount" (*pudore flagitii, crebrescente invidia*, 3.34.2).³³¹ Now, in a post-Cremona atmosphere of exceptional brutality, Primus must reassert some control over his army, if he has any hope of reversing the *invidia* which they well deserve, and which he helped foster.

This task proves difficult, however, as the greed which determined the calculus of Cremona does not loosen its grip in the immediate aftermath. And in fact, after a narrative panel

³³⁰ Cf. Morgan (2006) 190: "The campaign conducted by the legions under Antonius Primus' legions falls naturally into two parts. Their initial moves...established them firmly in northern Italy with the sack of Cremona, still the enemy's base in the area. Then came their more dilatory advance south toward Rome, culminating in the killing of Vitellius in late December."

³³¹ It is Primus' concern regarding growing resentment which prompts him to ban the imprisonment of those left alive, which in turn, coupled with the other Italians' refusal to ransom men taken as slaves, led to the execution of several prisoners. Cf. 3.34.2.

on the struggles facing the Vitellians post-Cremona (3.36-48), the Flavian narrative resumes with a notice of the recent moral decline of Primus, whose “greed, pride, and other hidden vices” (*avaritiam superbiam ceteraque occulta mala*, 3.49.1) have now emerged as the result of his success.³³² In his thirst for power (*potentiam*), he now begins actively corrupting his men as a matter of policy:

utque licentia militem imbueret, interfectorum centurionum ordines legionibus offerebat. eo suffragio turbidissimus quisque delecti; nec miles in arbitrio ducum, sed duces militari violentia trahebantur. quae seditiosa et corrumpendae disciplinae mox in praedam vertebat... (3.49.2)

In order that he might steep the soldiery in license, he offered his legions [the privilege of filling] the ranks of dead centurions. In that election all the wildest men were chosen; soldiers were not subject to the judgement of their commanders, but the commanders to the violence of soldiers. Antonius soon turned these seditious activities into his own profit (*praeda*), indeed for the purpose of corroding discipline.

In this passage, Primus, rather than extol and enforce the proper roles of general and common soldier—a shocking development, given his long-winded thoughts on the matter before Cremona (3.19)—gladly blurs the lines for his own enrichment. The use of *praeda* suggests especially that he is violating the calculus of 3.26.3: now, rather than weighting the scales with plunder to motivate his soldiers, he himself takes part in the greed.³³³ Furthermore, though the army’s thirst for plunder has been slaked for a time, the common soldiers make seditious noise over the lack of a donative (3.50.3).³³⁴ Tacitus’ decision to include a complaint of this nature immediately

³³² See Damon (2006) 271. Wellesley (1972) 145: “T[acitus] inclines toward a static view of human personality, whereby evil characteristics, revealed however late in life, are regarded as previously latent or repressed;” he cites the “famous character sketch of Tiberius at A. 4.51” as evidence. Woodman (1998) 68-69, less inclined to demonize Tiberius, offers a dissenting “portrait of a man whose sense of responsibility was in perpetual conflict with his desire for withdrawal, of a man who was truly *ambiguus imperandi*.” Martin and Woodman (1989) 31 insightfully express the complexity of Tacitus’ portrayal of Tiberius as “consist[ing] of a whole series of modifications or adjustments, as if he were photographing his subject from a series of different angles and in different lights: none of the frames, whether in close-up or not, is contradicted by another, but each produces a different effect.”

³³³ Cf. Wellesley (1972) 145 on *in praedam*: “that is, he sold the appointments to the highest bidders.”

³³⁴ More precisely, their lack of a *clavarium* (“shoe-nail money”), which Tacitus defines parenthetically as *donativi nomen est*. Wellesley (1972) 147 explains: “The troops were charged for their food, clothing, boots, etc. by

after the large financial gains at Cremona does not reflect well on the soldiers, and effectively conveys the idea that their greed will never cease to be a problem for Primus: even sated with plunder, they expect handouts!

Primus, however, quickly reasserts relative control over the *avaritia* that has overrun him and his army. When the Flavian advance troops want to hasten against Vitellius' men at Carsulae before reinforcements arrive, lest they be forced to share the plunder (*praedae*, 3.60.1), Primus attempts to reverse the trend toward greed by appealing to their shared Roman identity:

vocatos ad contionem Antonius docuit ... satis gloriae proelio Cremonensi partum et exitio Cremonae nimium invidiae: ne concupiscerent Romam capere potius quam servare. maiora illis praemia et multo maximum decus, si incolumitatem senatui populoque Romano sine sanguine quaesissent. his ac talibus mitigati animi. (3.60.2)

Antonius Primus pointed out his men convened in assembly ... that they had earned enough glory at the battle of Cremona and too much ill-will upon its destruction. He bade that they yearn to preserve rather than to seize Rome. They would have, he said, greater rewards and by far the greatest honor, if they sought the security for the Senate and the People of Rome without bloodshed. By these and such words, the soldiers' spirits were tamed.

In no uncertain terms, Primus here argues that Rome must not be another Cremona. *sanguine* recalls the calculations at Cremona, though now, pointedly, it is not their own blood but the bloodshed of their fellow Romans which Primus insists is of primary importance. Primus, rather than give in to the *praedae avaritia* (cf. *aviditate praedae*, 3.26.3), attempts to sell the attractiveness of glory (*decus*) as reward for preserving Rome—the very thing which his army had once rejected as “pointless” (*inania*, 3.19.2). *maiora...praemia* is uncomfortably vague, and probably intentionally so: does *praemia* generically anticipate the more precise *decus* (*OLD* s.v. 2), or is it a virtual euphemism for the material spoils of war (*OLD* s.v. 3)? In other words, does

stoppages debited to their pay accounts and this demand must have been for extra pay to offset the cost of boot repairs.”

Primus suggest that the prize awaiting them is glory, or that there will be other “greater prizes” in addition to glory such as plunder? Perhaps against the sinister interpretation is that *praemia* is listed first and in a syntactically normal position. Yet the possibilities inherent in the word are likely meant to resonate with soldier and reader alike. Ambiguity aside, Primus’ plea for “security...without bloodshed” (*incolumitatem...sine sanguine*) is proved feasible in the subsequent Vitellian panel, where merely the fear of the Flavian army’s size fomented chaos and disloyalty (3.61-63), suggesting that no further bloodshed will be needed to effect a Flavian victory at this point. Tacitus (via Primus) is confronting a very serious problem in civil warfare: how does a victorious challenger transition from treasonous rebel to legitimate new regime, while simultaneously fulfilling victorious soldiers’ expectations of material reward? Primus’ answer: attempt to adjust those expectations.

After the armies of Vespasian bear down on Rome, Vitellius sends delegations to each army to sue for peace. Primus’ army, Tacitus tells us, was the most receptive, “not because the troops were more restrained (*modestior*) but because their general had more of a hold on them (*duci plus auctoritatis*, 3.80.2).”³³⁵ As a “last effort to prevent a head-on collision,”³³⁶ Vitellius entrusts delivery of a letter to the Vestal Virgins in the delegation, in which the sitting emperor asks for a delay of one day so that “everything can come together more easily” (*facilius omnia conventura*, 3.81.2)—an apparent euphemism for surrender.³³⁷ Primus—the man who, on the eve of his own army’s assault on the Vitellians at Cremona, risked sparking a mutiny to ask his troops for a delay of one day (3.19-21)³³⁸—refuses, arguing that “because of the murder of

³³⁵ Trans. Wellesley (2009) 175. It is only for the delegation sent to Primus that Tacitus slows down his narrative.

³³⁶ Wellesley (1972) 183.

³³⁷ Cf. *Sal. Hist.* 2.74: *interim legatis ostentans et deditionem cunctis praesentibus facilius conventuram* (“meanwhile he held out to the envoys lenient terms and that surrender would be more easily worked out when everyone was present,” trans. Ramsey (2015)), cited by Heubner (1972) 192.

³³⁸ See pp. 106-9 above.

Sabinus and the burning of the Capitol, the normal commerce of war had been dissolved” (*Sabini caede et incendio Capitolii dire<m>pta belli commercia*, 3.81.2). The economic tinge provided by the primary sense of *commercium* (*OLD* s.v. 1) alludes to plunder.³³⁹ Ironically, however, Primus *does* end up asking his men to wait a day until attacking the city (3.82.1). Tacitus explains:

ratio cunctandi, ne asperatus proelio miles non populo, non senatui, ne templis quidem ac delubris deorum consuleret. sed omnem prolationem ut inimicam victoriae suspectabant. (3.82.1)

His reason for waiting was his fear that the troops, once stirred up after a battle, would have no regard for the people and senators or even for the temples and shrines of the gods. However, the men suspected any postponement as being detrimental to their victory. (trans. Wellesley)

Primus fears the possibility of a repeat performance of the outrages committed against Cremona (3.33). His fear proves justified. The civilians and enemy combatants in Rome and its vicinity are no more spared the greed and violent impulses of the Flavian army than were the citizens of Cremona. But this time, Primus’ role in the matter fades from view, along with all other individual identities.

When the battle for Rome is joined at last, Tacitus relates that Flavians and Vitellians were so busy killing themselves that the booty fell to the crowd of civilians (*...parte maiore praedae potiebantur: nam milite ad sanguinem et caedes obverso spolia in vulgus cedebant* (“[the people watching the fighting] got the majority of the plunder: for, with the soldiers turned towards on blood and slaughter, the spoils fell to the mob,” 3.83.1). This detail is consistent with Tacitus’ generally pessimistic opinion of the *vulgus*—a far cry from the virtuous Cremonese

³³⁹ Cf. Verg. A. 10.532-3 and Tac. A. 14.33.2. Wellesley (1972) 183 translates “negotiations normal in war,” yet the primary sense of actual commercial exchange ought not to be overlooked.

victims.³⁴⁰ Yet Cremona still looms: *sanguinem et caedes*, coupled with *praedae* and *spolia*, evoke the same “scales of war” (3.26.3).

Tacitus’ decision to infect all sides with blame—both the civil warriors who wreak havoc and the *vulgus* which looks on and reaps the reward—is consistent with a larger trend, found elsewhere in the *Histories* in times of great duress, to spread blame all around. Dylan Sailor observes that, in assessing blame for the destruction of the Capitol, Tacitus condemns no one individual, or even seeks to blame either the Flavians or Vitellians more harshly than the other, but rather indicts the whole imperial system.³⁴¹ Similarly, when, on the morning of 21 December under Primus’ command, the Flavian forces terrorize and ransack the city, committing every atrocity along the way (3.83-84; 4.1.1), no Flavian avoids implication in the violence. Tacitus simply defines all the Flavian perpetrators as “the victors” (*victores*, 3.84.1, *victoribus*, 3.84.3, *victores*, 4.1.1).³⁴² Primus and the other commanders, along with most distinctions of rank, have by this point largely fallen out of the narrative. Such tendency toward generalization, I would argue, hints to the reader that the wickedness of the past three books has piled up to such a degree that it is beginning to infect everything and everyone—whole groups and institutions, rather than mere individuals. Commander and soldier alike have been subsumed into an anonymous force of violent, greedy, and vengeful men. This shift toward faceless evil takes on even darker dimensions when we consider the highly Tacitean *sententia* with which the fourth book begins: *interfecto Vitellio bellum magis desierat quam pax coeperat* (“After Vitellius was executed war had died down more than peace began,” 4.1.1). The institutionalized violence of the Vitellio-Flavian conflict, Tacitus suggests, will transcend the war itself.

³⁴⁰ For Tacitus’ complex, but ultimately low opinion of the *vulgus*, see Newbold (1976).

³⁴¹ Sailor (2008) 205-18.

³⁴² By 4.1.1, the Vitellians, conversely, are simply “the conquered” (*victos*) as well.

As the faceless Flavian horde achieves its ghastly victory at Rome, Tacitus repeatedly reenacts and recalls the events at Cremona.³⁴³ During the Flavian assault on the praetorian camp, Tacitus relates their brutal, financially-driven calculations: "...the victors...were all the more intent to simultaneously move in everything ever invented to destroy powerful cities (the *testudo*, missiles, earthworks, torches), proclaiming that that endeavor would be the culmination of all the toil and danger they had swallowed in so many battles" (*eo intentius victores, praecipuo veterum cohortium studio, cuncta validissimarum urbium excidiis reperta simul admovent, testudinem tormenta aggerem facesque, quidquid tot proeliis laboris ac periculi hausissent, opere illo consummari clamitantes*, 3.84.1). The "honorable death" (*decori exitus*, 3.84.3) earned by the brave Vitellians in the camp further casts the acquisitive and self-centered Flavians in a negative light.³⁴⁴

Furthermore, as the Flavian legions brutalize and plunder Vitellian and non-Vitellian alike in what is now a "captured city" (*captae urbis*, 4.1.3), the imagery and language of digging recurs for a third time:³⁴⁵

ac mox augesciente licentia scrutari ac protrahere abditos.... quae saevitia recentibus odiis sanguine explebatur, dein verterat in avaritiam. nihil usquam secretum aut clausum sinebant, Vitellianos occultari simulantes. (4.1.1-2)

And soon, once the licentiousness had increased, they began searching around for people who were hiding and dragged them out.... While their hatred was still fresh, they satisfied such savagery with bloodshed, which then had turned into greed. They allowed nothing to remain either hidden or closed, pretending as though Vitellians were hiding everywhere.

³⁴³ On the Second Battle of Cremona as a reenactment of the First, see Joseph (2012) 115-20.

³⁴⁴ Ash (1999) 51 convincingly argues that "the collective identity of Tacitus' Vitellian troops is not static. Although initially these soldiers crave violent destruction, nevertheless they gradually develop unexpected moral fiber and show increasing sophistication in their capacity to make judgments for themselves. In *Histories* 3 a pattern begins to emerge whereby Tacitus commends the common Vitellian soldiers, but casts their officers in a much more flattering light...."

³⁴⁵ For the *urbs capta* motif and Rome in the *Histories*, see also 1.50.1, 1.82.2, 2.89.1, 4.54.2. On the motif generally, see Paul (1982). On the motif in Tacitus, see Keitel (1984) 307-12 and Joseph (2012) 137-39.

The resurgence of the digging motif recalls the Vitellians' efforts to pierce through the Flavian *testudo* as Primus pointed to Cremona (3.27). Even more significantly, the Flavians' search recalls the legions of Valens who, angry at their commander's perceived avarice, mutinied against him and dug in his camp for the gold and plunder they believed he had withheld (2.29). Valens had tried to contain his legions' appetite for/to plunder. Instead, he found himself the target of that appetite, and barely escaped with his life. Primus, on the other hand, allowed his own legions to direct their excessive greedy energy *outward*. Innocents suffered and died—at Cremona, at Rome. Yet Primus never lost that all-important bond with his soldiers: he gave them plenty of opportunities to enrich themselves; and in return, though it was not easy, loyalty to Primus and to the Flavian cause was maintained. And, most importantly, victory was achieved.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to provide an interpretive framework for viewing the campaign of Antonius Primus within the larger framework of oath-gift relations in the *Histories*. In Chapter 2, we saw Tacitus praise Vespasian and Mucianus for restoring the donative to a more reasonable, even pre-Claudian size. The Flavians' administrative abilities and sensitivities to how best to restore Roman *fides* appeared virtually unassailable. The work was not finished; the Principate still needed to be won. But they were off to an impressive and measured start. In the present chapter, we have seen that the reasonable and promising balance between oaths and donatives achieved in the East has little relevance in the actual business of war, however, as legions recklessly plunder and murder their way to Rome. In fact, readers of this chapter will have noticed that oaths do no factor into my discussion; that is because they do not factor into Tacitus'.

Primus not only highjacks Flavian military strategy, he highjacks Roman military culture. The grand bargain struck between Primus and his legions—offering the plunder of innocents as incentives toward violence in exchange for some bare minimum of discipline and loyalty—is the dark underbelly of that other, more entrenched first-century bargain I have argued for so far, cash gifts in exchange for formal pledges of fealty. Immediately after Vespasian and Mucianus reforge the consensus between soldiers’ and commanders’ expectations lost earlier that year, Primus adopts a darker version of it to suit his seedier purposes: engineered oaths give way to mutinies narrowly avoided; funds drawn from coffers and doled out in an orderly, official fashion give way to sanctioned rape, arson, murder, and of course plunder.

Valens, Primus’ embattled Vitellian foil, is Tacitus’ way of saying that Primus essentially had two choices: embrace the twisted calculation or lose the war. But Tacitus is crueler still: to win is to become no different than Rome’s worst enemies of legend. Given these two choices—die in a mutiny or lose your *Romanitas*—it seems especially appealing to interpret suicide in civil war as a positive good.

Chapter 4

The Chaotic Oaths of a *bellum permixtum*: *Histories* 4 and the Batavian Revolt³⁴⁶

...trina bella civilia, plura externa ac plerumque permixta...(H. 1.2.1)

...three civil wars, several foreign wars, and a great many wars a combination of the two...

So reads Tacitus' initial breakdown of the many armed conflicts contained within the (originally) 12 or 14 books of the *Histories*.³⁴⁷ Its first three books are filled with accounts of those *trina bella civilia*: the war between the Galbans and the Othonians, which ends in the gruesome beheading of Galba (1.41); the war between the Othonians and Vitellians, which ends with the suicide of Otho (2.49); and the war between the Vitellians and Flavians, which *officially* ends with the subdued execution of Vitellius (3.85). Book 4 primarily concerns itself with what has come to be known as the "Batavian Revolt."³⁴⁸ Julius Civilis, prominent leader of the Batavian people and ally of Rome, kindled a rebellion against the Vitellian regime, and later against the

³⁴⁶ Front. *Strat.* 4.3.14 refers to it as a *bellum Germanicum*. "Batavian Revolt" and its variations—e.g., Merkel's (1966) equivalent German "der Bataveraufstand," Haynes' (2003) plural "the Batavian Revolts," and Wellesley's (2009) "the revolt of Civilis"—designate the uprising of Batavians, then other German tribes, then some Gauls, against the Roman Empire in 69-70(?) CE. The term itself implies a *bellum externum*, which it no doubt was at least in part. The term is a good one, and I will use it throughout the present chapter. For summaries of the Batavian Revolt generally, see esp. Brunt (1960), Merkel (1966), Chilver (1985) 6-19 and Levick (1999) 107-10. On the Batavian Revolt as a *bellum permixtum*, see most recently Haynes (2003) 155-63, Edwards (2012) 255 and Master (2016) 142-57.

³⁴⁷ See, e.g., Martin (1981) 67 for this standard view. Cf. McCulloch (1984) 173-75, who suggests that the *Annals* and *Histories* may have been "intended to be one long work."

³⁴⁸ Book 5 contains an incomplete section of the Batavian Revolt (5.14-26) after the Jewish excursus not discussed in this chapter. Without *Histories* 4-5, we would know next to nothing about the Batavian revolt. Among the other surviving accounts and references, Jos. *BJ* 1.5, 7.75-88, which Chilver (1985) 9 says "demonstrate ignorance of western affairs," is the fullest. Cass. Dio 66.3 is entirely unhelpful. On the meagerness of these sources, see Murison (1991) 1707. Suetonius and Plutarch are silent. In the absence of nearly all possibility for corroboration, Münzer (1899) and Walser (1951) 86-128 express doubt that Tacitus' account of the Batavian revolt can be trusted. Brunt (1960) 494, while acknowledging that next to nothing Tacitus writes can be corroborated, believes that the account ought to be taken seriously, adducing as evidence his having been a contemporary of 69-70 and how often Tacitus has been proven right. Murison (1991) 1709 agrees.

Flavians when they assumed power.³⁴⁹ The latter rebellion, which would grow to include several other German and Gallic peoples, was finally put down in the lost portion of the *Histories*.³⁵⁰ As a prominent Batavian leader seeking to galvanize a proto-nationalist Germanic movement, Civilis represents an external threat to Roman rule. Yet his former status as a loyal Roman auxiliary commander trained in Roman fighting tactics (as well as his curiously evocative name) points to an element of internal danger as well.³⁵¹ As we shall see below, Civilis aligns himself with his Flavian allies-turned-enemies through imitation and adoption of their strategies for controlling and leading armies: a master orchestrator of oaths, he successfully gets his German followers to swear a number of oaths, while offering plenty of chances for self-enrichment.

At a time when Rome needed to heal from the physical and metaphysical wounds caused by the outrageous transgressions of the *trina bella civilia* and move toward *bella externa*, Civilis,

³⁴⁹ Walser (1951) 103-9 denies “that either Gauls or Germans could have aimed at independence or at establishing a powerful Gallic or German empire.” Brunt (1960) *passim*, whose summary of Walser I quote (p. 497), offers several compelling arguments that there were indeed authentic (proto-)nationalistic feelings driving the Germans and Gauls to rebel—most of these arguments deriving from Tacitus’ own account. Urban (1985), following Walser, criticizes Tacitus’ ability to sort fact from pro-Flavian bias. Murison (1991) 1709 responds that Urban “goes too far, for it is precisely in individual points of detail that Tacitus can be shown to be highly accurate.” Levick (1999) 107-8, who agrees with Brunt’s position, adds: “The Flavians had reason to adjust their account of their dealings with the Batavian Julius Civilis and represent the revolt as a nationalistic uprising... fortunately Tacitus was not committed to a Flavian account”—implying that we can trust him when he characterizes the revolt as external. Haynes (2003) 148 approaches the question from the perspective of Civilis’ own identity: “Civilis’ barbarism, a surface characteristic unlike his inner (civilized) intelligence, consists of ‘passing himself off’ as one or other of Rome’s famous former enemy [i.e. Sertorius or Hannibal: 4.13.2]. ... Civilis appears to play rather than be the barbarian; on the other hand, he also plays Vespasian’s ally. From all angles, Civilis both is and is not assimilable as one of *us*.” For those who largely accept the thrust of Tacitus’ account, see also Syme (1958) 172-75, Nicolas (1979) 1268-70, Willems (1984) 226-31. For those who believe Tacitus to have distorted the truth by either regurgitating or adhering to a pro-Flavian bias, see also Münzer (1899), Bessone (1972) and Wiedemann (1996). In recent years, Keitel (1992a), Haynes (2003), Timpe (2005), Ash (2009) and Master (2016) have to varying degrees turned away from (unknowable) questions of historical accuracy, and have each in their own way attempted to understand the Batavian Revolt historiographically and in the context of the *Histories*.

³⁵⁰ The extant work ends abruptly at 5.25, in midst of a duel of words between Civilis and Cerialis. There is no closure on either a micro or macro level.

³⁵¹ In Tacitus’ brief excursus on the Batavian people (4.12-13), it is noted that their cohorts were “still commanded, according the the ancient custom, by the noblest men among them” (*vetere instituto nobilissimi popularium regebant*, 4.12.3). Brunt (1960) 507 astutely observes the likely reasons Tacitus provides this information: the details of the far-flung Batavians may not have been known to Tacitus’ audience; and, more importantly, the fact that the Batavians were somewhat self-ruled explains to Tacitus’ audience why it was so easy for them to separate from Rome. For Civilis’ relationship with Rome, see also Ash (2009) 96-97.

who was neither fully Roman nor fully barbarian—instigated instead a new “mixed” (*permixta*, 1.2.1) phase of fighting marked by both domestic and foreign elements.³⁵² Expressions of this duality abound: as early as book 2, Tacitus relates that some rowdy and truculent auxiliaries in Vitellius’ army are sent back to Germany, thus signifying “the beginning of a war simultaneously internal and external” (*principium interno simul externoque bello*, 2.69.1). Then, around the time Cremona was destroyed, we are told that “Germany...was thrown into chaos, and due to the complacency of the generals and the mutiny of the legions, due to violence from without and the treachery of our allies, Rome was nearly dashed” (*turbata...Germania, et socordia ducum, seditione legionum, externa vi, perfidia sociali prope adflicta Romana res*, 3.46.1). And finally in book 4, Tacitus paints the following picture of the coalition of German forces laying siege to the Roman legionary camp at Vetera:³⁵³

hinc veteranarum cohortium signa, inde depromptae silvis lucisque ferarum imagines, ut cuique genti inire proelium mos est, mixta belli civilis externique facie obstupefecerant obsessos. (4.22.2)

The besieged were dumbfounded to see, on one side [of the Rhine], the standards of veteran cohorts, and on the other, the images of wild beasts which had been brought forth from forests and groves, according to each tribe’s customary way of entering battle—a mixture in appearance of civil and foreign war.

Civilis’ and his army’s mixed identity is not the only force opposing Rome’s total transition to *bella externa*. Throughout book 4, Tacitus repeatedly demonstrates that the factionalism of books 1-3 along Vitellian and Flavian lines persists even long after Vitellius’ death. According to the book’s ominous first words, “after Vitellius had been killed, war stopped more than peace began” (*interfecto Vitellio bellum magis desierat quam pax coeperat*, 4.1.1).

³⁵² For Tacitus’ notion that Civilis represents a “transitional” enemy for Vespasian and for Rome itself, see Haynes (2003) 148-49 and esp. Ash (2009) *passim*, who analyzes the civil wars of books 1-3 as a period of “fission,” and the Batavian Revolt of books 4 and 5 as inaugurating a fraught period of “fusion.”

³⁵³ See Levene (2009a) 226.

The Flavian victors, not prepared to make peace with the surviving Vitellians, seek revenge by turning the city of Rome into a virtual warzone, full of violence and plunder (4.1.1-3). In turn, as we shall see in great detail below, many of the Vitellians are unwilling to sacrifice their loyalties to a dead man. Many oaths are made which purport to end factional conflict. But Tacitus repeatedly denies the *sacramentum* sole power to create and enforce new loyalties. The people themselves must be willing to undergo a change of heart. Otherwise, *bellum civile* will, on some level, never end.

PART 1: The First Phase of Revolt

INTRODUCING CIVILIS

Neither Civilis nor the Batavian people possess any history or identity free of civil strife. In fact, Batavia's very existence on the map is owed to a German domestic dispute: in a brief ethnography (4.12-13), Tacitus relates that the island nation was once part of the Chatti tribe, but was "driven out by domestic unrest" (*seditione domestica pulsi*, 4.12.2) and forced to settle on an island near the mouth of the Rhine, where they presently reside.³⁵⁴ The tribe's intimate connection to internal strife persists to the narrative present: Julius Civilis, the leading citizen of the Batavian people during the Year of Four Emperors, is both physical embodiment and logical result of Rome's civil wars:

iniectae Civili catenae, missusque ad Neronem et a Galba absolutus sub Vitellio rursus discrimen adiit, flagitante supplicium eius exercitu: inde causae irarum spesque ex malis nostris. (4.13.1)

³⁵⁴ Cf. *G.* 29.1: *Chattorum quondam populus et seditione domestica in eas sedes transgressus* ("a people once of the Chatti who, due to domestic strife, crossed over to that seat"). Caesar, by calling their home island the "island of the Batavians" (*insulam...Batavorum*, *BG* 4.10), provides a *terminus ante quem* for this migration; see Chilver (1985) 32. According to Tacitus, Agricola received in friendship an Irish king who was similarly "expelled by domestic unrest" (*expulsum seditione domestica*, *Agr.* 24.3).

Civilis was put in chains and sent to Nero. And, though freed by Galba, he ran into trouble again under Vitellius when the army demanded his execution. This is the reason for his anger and why our faults gave him hope.

Interpretation of Civilis' motivations rests in part on how one interprets the antecedent of *inde*.

On one level, it certainly refers to the imprisonment under Nero and the near execution under Vitellius (*catenae...discrimen...supplicium*),³⁵⁵ experiences liable to be the causes of anyone's anger. Yet, in a broader sense, we might better understand that Civilis, after being passed from one fate to another as the imperial throne rapidly changed occupant (*Nerone...Galba...Vitellio*), is enraged at the perpetual instability and helplessness to which he is constantly subjected—enraged, in other words, at Rome's unpredictability no less than his own mistreatment.³⁵⁶ And Civilis realizes that it is this very instability of the Roman world which gives him a hope of challenging it (*spes ex malis nostris*).

When Civilis finally begins to assert his agency in book 4, he does so in the same way the Roman civil war factions had done in books 1-3, namely through the orchestration of mutinies and oaths, and the enticement toward plunder. It is important to realize that, during the early stages of the Batavian revolt, the war between Vitellius and Vespasian is not yet concluded. Thus, the Civilis narrative of book 4 does not so much continue the Vitellio-Flavian narrative of books 2-3, as add another dimension and perspective to it. Civilis' treatment of his army

³⁵⁵ Tacitus first mentions Vitellius pardoning Civilis at 1.59.1.

³⁵⁶ Tacitus' decision to introduce the Batavian challenge as he does—i.e., by backtracking in time and sketching a summary of what happened to Civilis during the reigns of Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius—follows the same pattern as Tacitus' introduction of Vespasian and the eastern legions months before the Flavian acclamation: *...auditiue saepius in Syria Iudaeaque Caesares quam inspecti. nulla seditio legionum, tantum adversus Parthos minae, vario eventu; et proximo civili bello turbatis aliis inconcussa ibi pax, dein fides erga Galba. mox, ut Othonem ac Vitellium, scelestis armis res Romanas raptum ire volgatum est...* ("...and, in Syria and Judaea, the Julio-Claudians had been heard about more often than seen. There were no mutinies among the legions, only threats against the Parthians, with mixed results; and in the most recent civil war [Ash (2007) 92: "i.e., the conflicts leading to Nero's suicide and Galba's accession"], when others were thrown into tumult, there peace was undisturbed; thereupon loyalty towards Galba. Later, when it became common knowledge that Otho and Vitellius had taken up wicked arms and were going about seizing Roman power..., 2.6.1-2).

resembles and reenacts, in many cases, the deeds of the Flavian leaders Antonius Primus and Flavian Mucianus, while the nascent Batavian challenge as a whole mirrors several aspects of the Flavian experiment. In that respect, the Batavians and Flavians are, disturbingly, even more similar to one another than the Flavians are similar to the Galbans, Othonians, or Vitellians. Yet it is also undeniable that, especially in the first phase of the Batavian Revolt—i.e., before the Gauls join forces with the Germans—Civilis and his allies repeatedly mark themselves as barbarians, totally separate from the Roman experience. As such, the Romans, though still fractured into hostile Vitellian and Flavian factions, do have some success reorienting their aggression toward the “foreign” enemy and away from one another.³⁵⁷

CIVILIS AND OATHS

The narrative of the “Batavian Revolt” begins when the “authors of an engineered mutiny get [the common soldiers] to refuse enlistment [in auxiliary cohorts]” (*compositae seditionis auctores perpulere, ut dilectum abnuerent*, 4.14.2). Mutiny, as we have seen repeatedly, means the realignment of loyalty and the swearing of new oaths. And indeed, immediately upon delivery of a stirring speech to his fellow disaffected Batavians enumerating the outrages committed against him and his countrymen by Vitellius’ legionaries (4.14.1-2),³⁵⁸ Civilis secures the loyalty of his followers by leading them in an oath:

magno cum adsensu auditus, barbaro ritu et patriis exsecrationibus universos adigit. missi ad Canninefates qui consilia sociarent. ea gens partem insulae colit, origine lingua virtute par Batavis; numero superantur. mox occultis nuntiis pellexit Britannica auxilia, Batavorum cohortes missas in Germaniam. (4.15.1)

Having been heard with great approval, [Civilis] compels everyone to swear an oath marked with barbarian ritual and the traditional curses for breaking it. Envoys were sent to the Canninefates to join the conspiracy. That tribe inhabits a part of the

³⁵⁷ On various points of successful and unsuccessful reorientation in *Histories* 4, see Ash (2009) *passim*.

³⁵⁸ Hence “engineered” (*compositae*).

island; they are similar to the Batavians in history, language and bravery, though smaller in population. Soon, Civilis used secret messages to entice the British auxiliaries—that is, the Batavian cohorts that had been sent to Germany.

This oath passage contains a unique combination of the familiar (i.e., Roman) and the strange (i.e., barbarian). On the face of it, the oath-scene shows a German playing to a German crowd, yet intratextual correspondences with Vespasian's acclamation (book 2) hint that there is something else at play as well. Let us first examine the oath's strangeness, then its familiarity.

Though Tacitus relates little of the oath's actual content—save that it seems to have contained a curse for those who break it—the chosen vocabulary marks the scene as certainly less than fully Roman. Tacitus nowhere in the *Histories* uses *ritus* to describe a Roman ritual, much less a Roman *sacramentum*; he reserves the word for describing the exotic.³⁵⁹ *exsecratio*, in the sense of “a curse invoked in the event of failure to keep a promise” (*OLD* s.v. 2), occurs only here in the *Histories*.³⁶⁰ The single occurrence of *exsecratio* (*OLD* s.v. 2) in the *Annals* appears in a passage about Parthians rather than Romans (A. 6.41.2), which perhaps suggests that Tacitus viewed the word as containing connotations of foreignness. In any case, the modifiers *barbaro* and *patriis* double up to mark the procedure as certainly foreign. Additionally, the one-sentence ethnography of the Canninefates (*ea gens...superantur*) may seem merely a colorful footnote at first glance, yet the emphasis on this tribe's similarity to the Batavians suggests the need for an oath which is Germanic in orientation.³⁶¹ Civilis is attempting to construct a coalition of German tribes, and understands that appeals to common cultural heritage and custom help

³⁵⁹ Including 4.15.1, there are five occurrences of *ritus* in the *Histories*: the phrase *templi ritum* describes the unique and exotic representation of Venus at the temple of Paphos (2.2.2); the term is especially favored in the Jewish ethnography, appearing three times in two chapters. (5.4.1, 5.5.1, 5.5.5). In the *Germania*, Tacitus relates that the Suevi “celebrate the horrors of their barbarian rite (*barbari ritus horrenda*) by publicly killing a person” (G. 39.2). Chilver (1985) 35 is skeptical, probably rightly, that something so dark is meant at H. 4.15.1 as at G. 39.2.

³⁶⁰ *exsecratio* appears at 3.25.3 and A. 6.41.3 to mean simply “the act of cursing, imprecation” (*OLD* s.v. 1). For further examples of the meaning listed under *OLD* s.v. 2, cf. Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.104, *Sest.* 15, and Liv. 10.38.10, with Heubner (1976) 45.

³⁶¹ Cf. Heubner (1976) 45: “die civitas Canninefatium lag im westlichen Teil der insula Batavorum.”

reinforce common ethnic identities which he can exploit for his own purposes. A *sacramentum*—that is, a specifically *Roman* loyalty oath—would certainly not have had special appeal to any shared sense of Germanic culture or ancestry.³⁶²

Though the content and style of the oath administered by Civilis (4.15.1) is portrayed by Tacitus as uniquely Germanic, the *tactics* Civilis uses to ensure the acceptance and spread of that oath resonate with the successful oaths of Vespasian's acclamation (2.73-81) in several ways argued for in Chapter 2:³⁶³

(a) Like Mucianus, Civilis *immediately* capitalizes on the positive mood which has been engendered among the soldiers (*id ipsum opperiens*, 2.80.2 ~ *magno cum adsensu auditus*, 4.15.1). Thus, both leaders exhibit a canny ability to “take the temperature” of the oath's audience.

(b) Like Mucianus, Civilis leaves nothing to chance, opting instead to force the issue (*adigit*, 2.80.2 ~ *adigit*, 4.15.1). The use of *adigit*, we will recall, marks an oath as compelled or orchestrated to some degree, as opposed to voluntary and spontaneous. Moreover, the curses uttered against oath-breakers implicit in *exsecrationibus*, though lexically marked as barbarian in orientation, intensify the impression of Civilis' forcefulness: he wants to ensure there will be no turning back.

(c) Like Mucianus, Civilis extends an invitation to participate in political revolution to the “common man” (*militem*, 2.80.2; *Antiochensium theatrum ingressus...*, 2.80.2 ~ *primores*

³⁶² Despite the occasional lip-service paid in *Histories* 4 to Gallo-Germanic unity, these sorts of *exsecrationes patriae* seem not to have been shared between Germans and Gauls: when some Gallic tribes later join the rebellion, it appears, given the familiar formulaic language, to be a Roman-style *sacramentum* which Civilis withholds: “*neque se neque quamquam Batavum in verba Galliarum adigit, fisis Germanorum opibus...*” (4.61.1).

³⁶³ For Mucianus' role in Vespasian's acclamation, see Ch. 2, pp. 68-78.

gentis et promptissimos volgi, 4.14.2; *universos*, 4.15.1). He avoids the fatal mistake Caecina made in excluding the average soldier from the process of sedition (3.13).³⁶⁴

(d) Like Mucianus, Civilis, after having secured the loyalty of the men with whom he is physically present, sets about expanding the scope of the oath to neighboring groups with similar sympathies (*Syria omnis in eodem sacramento fuit*, 2.81.1; *quidquid provinciarum...iuravere*, 2.81.2 ~ *missi ad Canninefates...pellexit Britannica auxilia, Batavorum cohortes...*, 4.15.1).

By virtue of these many similarities to Mucianus' successful orchestration of oaths during Vespasian's imperial bid, Civilis demonstrates that he and his revolution are a force to be reckoned with. In the Batavians, Tacitus slyly suggests, the Flavians may have met their most daunting enemy yet, namely a version of themselves.

Four chapters after indicating that Civilis had extended the offer of allegiance in his rebellion to the Canninefates (4.15.1 and (d) above), Tacitus refocalizes the events through the Canninefates and Batavian cohorts themselves.³⁶⁵ Once again, Tacitus presents a sophisticated conflation of Roman mimicry and frightening barbarity:

isdem diebus Batavorum et Canninefatium cohortes, cum iussu Vitellii in urbem pergerent, missus a Civile nuntius adsequitur. intumescere statim superbia ferociaque et pretium itineris donativum, duplex stipendium, augeri equitum numerum, promissa sane a Vitellio, postulabant, non ut adsequerentur, sed causam seditioni. (4.19.1)

At that same time, the messenger sent by Civilis caught up with the cohorts of Batavians and Canninefates, as they were setting off for Rome under the order of Vitellius. They immediately swelled up in arrogance and anger and demanded, as price for making the journey, a donative, double pay, and an increase in the number

³⁶⁴ See Ch. 2, pp. 78-84.

³⁶⁵ The Batavian auxiliaries mentioned here are the same eight Batavian cohorts whom Valens acquired in the territory of the Lingones before he marched south (1.59.1) and then after the march sent away from the main force (*orbari...fortissimorum virorum auxilio*, 2.28.2), thereby sparking a mutiny (2.28-29). See Ch. 2, pp. 132-33 and Brunt (1960) 501.

of cavalry—things which Vitellius had no doubt promised. But they demanded them not in order to get them, but rather to give a pretext for mutiny.³⁶⁶

The Canninefates are apparently astute observers of the Roman *sacramentum-donativum* contract: in order to break their loyalty to Vitellius, they call in the donatives and the doubled salary they had been promised.³⁶⁷ But there is an important difference: whereas Roman armies in the *Histories* genuinely want their commanders' promises fulfilled and tend to remain loyal if their demands are met, the Canninefates cry poverty in order to scheme their way into *disloyalty*.³⁶⁸ In other words, whereas the end goal of many Roman armies has been to get paid—by no means an exceptionally noble goal, from an elite perspective—the end goal of the Canninefates' mutiny is even worse—to *be disloyal*! Tacitus is careful to spell out in explicit terms how the actual motive of the Canninefates (*causam seditioni*) differs from the typical motive for soldiers demanding money (*ut adsequerentur*). This clarification is necessary, since, in the *Histories*, Roman armies' desire for money is not typically accompanied by an ulterior motive. If anything the desire for money *is* the ulterior motive. As we saw in Chapter 1, the legions and praetorians under Galba, were not looking to turn against him; they really just wanted to get paid. The praetorians' eagerness to accept Otho was rooted in a desire to *restore* loyalty on their own terms. Self-enrichment is visible as an end goal in Valens' (1.51.1; 2.28-29), Primus' (3.19.2, 26.3), and even Mucianus' (2.80.3) armies as well. The cynical Canninefates reverse this process: they want to achieve mutiny (*causam seditioni*), and attempt to use their failure to obtain (*ut adsequerentur*) donatives and other forms of remuneration in order to reach

³⁶⁶ Translation adapted from Wellesley (2009) 193.

³⁶⁷ Chilver (1985) 40, citing Speidel (1973) 141-47: "the ordinary soldier in an auxiliary cohort received either two-thirds or five-sixths of the legionary's pay." He continues, however: "The Batavians' demand for doubling their existing pay...cannot be taken seriously, even if...*duplex* is not to be taken precisely. The only safe conclusion seems to be that the status and pay of the Batavian cohorts was significantly lower than that of the normal *auxilia*, presumably on account of their special position as tribal units..." Alföldy (1968) 91 disagrees.

³⁶⁸ Cf. Brunt (1960) 501-2.

their goal. It is as if Tacitus has put a funhouse mirror up to the social and financial interactions that have underpinned soldier-commander relations since the beginning of the work.

As Civilis continues to recruit more disaffected cohorts into his army, the Batavian-led coalition wins a series of battles against loyal Vitellians (4.18-20). At which point, Civilis, as any good Roman general would, ponders his best course of action. Recognizing that there is strength in Roman identity (*vim Romanam*, 4.21.1), he outwardly aligns his pan-German and anti-Roman ambitions with the up-and-comer Vespasian, by administering a Flavian oath to his own soldiers:

Civilis, adventu veteranorum cohortium iusti iam exercitus ductor, sed consilii ambiguus et vim Romanam reputans, cunctos qui aderant in verba Vespasiani adigit... (4.21.1)

With the arrival of the veteran cohorts, Civilis was now the leader of a real army. But, since he was uncertain of his plan and mulling over the strength of Rome, he compelled everyone present to swear an oath of allegiance to Vespasian...

Part of Civilis' danger lies in his willingness and ability to employ oaths—even contradictory ones—whenever it suits his purposes. (Before this Flavian oath, Civilis had already secured the same soldiers' loyalty to his proto-nationalist cause.) To Civilis, an oath is little more than a means of herding together large groups of soldiers to achieve a desired political outcome. And this time, the emulation of Mucianus is even more overt: not only do both men administer oaths to the same recipient (Vespasian), but Tacitus even repurposes his phrase from Mucianus' earlier effort in Antioch: *Mucianus alacrem militem in verba Vespasiani adigit* (2.80.2). Once again, Civilis—like Mucianus, who secured the loyalties of both the officers (2.76) and the common soldiers (2.80.2)—sees the importance in focusing on everyone (*cunctos*, 4.21.1; cf. *universos*, 4.15.1).

The similarities to Mucianus' triumphs grind to a halt, however, when the Vitellian legions—unlike the Syrians and other Easterners (2.80), and unlike the Canninefates (4.19)—refuse to alter their allegiances:

... mittitque legatos ad duas legiones, quae priore acie pulsae in Vetera castra concesserant, ut idem sacramentum acciperent. [2] redditur responsum: neque proditoris neque hostium se consiliis uti; esse sibi Vitellium principem, pro quo fidem et arma usque ad supremum spiritum retenturos: proinde perfuga Batavus arbitrium rerum Romanarum ne ageret, sed meritas sceleris poenas exspectaret. quae ubi relata Civili, incensus ira universam Batavorum gentem in arma rapit; iunguntur Bructeri Tenecteri et excita nuntiis Germania ad praedam famamque. (4.21.1-2)

... and [Civili] sent envoys to the two legions³⁶⁹—which had returned to the Vetera camp after being beaten in the previous battle—to collect the same oath. [2] An answer came back: they did not have any use for the advice of a traitor and enemy; Vitellius was their emperor and they would keep their weapons and loyalty to him till their final breath. So a Batavian deserter ought not to sit in judgement of Roman affairs,³⁷⁰ but wait for the punishments his crime deserves. When these things were related to Civili, he was kindled with rage, and led the entire Batavian nation into war. The Bructeri and Tenecteri joined them, and this news roused Germany to seek plunder and fame.

This refusal conforms to a pattern throughout the *Histories*, whereby Vitellians are portrayed as particularly stubborn and loyal to their emperor regardless of circumstance or reality.³⁷¹ Yet, on another level, this refusal suggests that the Roman soldiers of the Year of Four Emperors, for all their crimes and betrayals, are unwilling to swear allegiance to a group of foreigner cohorts with dreams of German unity. In other words, Tacitus demonstrates that, despite Civili's successful mimicry of Flavian oath tactics, the definitional and literal boundaries between Romans and barbarians have, at this early stage of the Batavian revolt, not yet collapsed.

³⁶⁹ Legions V (*Alaudae*) and XV (*Primigenia*); cf. 4.18.

³⁷⁰ Phrase borrowed from Wellesley (2009) 195.

³⁷¹ See Ch. 3, p. 143n341.

CIVILIS AND GREED

Much like Antonius Primus, Civilis understands how to exploit the soldiers' acquisitive tendencies to his own advantage. As mentioned briefly above, in order to convince his fellow Batavians to revolt (4.14), Civilis delivers a speech invoking the outrages caused by *Roman* greed, while stoking the Batavians' own impulses (4.14).³⁷² The Batavians apparently had a lot to be angry about: the Roman levy which Vitellius had imposed was oppressive and economically damaging;³⁷³ the recruiting officers were lining their pockets, holding the old and infirm for ransom, and raping young Batavian boys (4.14.1-3).³⁷⁴ After invoking these outrages, Civilis turns suggestively to thoughts of revenge: "Never before have Roman affairs been in worse shape; their winter quarters are full of nothing but loot and old men" (*numquam magis adflictam rem Romanam nec aliud in hibernis quam praedam et senes*, 4.14.4). By coupling an appeal to greed with appeals to nascent German (proto-)nationalism and pronouncements of Rome's degraded martial prowess (4.14.1-5), Civilis succeeds in using the promise of plunder to mobilize an offensive against Rome. That Civilis invokes the promise of material gain in order to spur on an army to attack a (technically) friendly force recalls the tactics of Antonius Primus, who offered up the riches of Cremona in order to sustain the momentum of his assault on the

³⁷² Tacitus also blames Rome's greed on the Frisian revolt of 28 CE: *Frisii... pacem exuere nostra magis avaritia quam obsequii impatientes* ("the Frisians cast aside peace more due to our greed than because they were unable to suffer obedience," A. 4.72.1). See Master (2016) 35-51, who cites Boudicca's revolt of 61 CE (A. 14.31.2) as being attributed to similar causes, and ultimately concludes: "Civilis' angry complaints about the expectation of provincial sacrifice are given significant persuasive force by the way in which Tacitus grounds them in a long tradition of discussions of the proper rewards for military service at Rome" (51).

³⁷³ In January, Germany had supplied auxiliary units to Valens' and Caecina's expeditions into Italy (1.61.2); see Chilver (1985) 34-35.

³⁷⁴ Roman law prohibited this sort of extortion: *lege Iulia repetundarum cavetur ne quis ob militem legendum mittendumve aes accipiat* ("in accordance with the Julian law on extortion, one cannot accept money on account of the enlistment or dispatching of soldiers," Paul. *dig.* 48.11.6.2); see Brunt (1960) 502. On similar barbarian charges of Roman soldiers' sexual misconduct, cf. *Agr.* 31.1 (Calgacus), A. 14.35.1 (Boudicca). Cf. Adler (2011) 131: "Tacitus has a penchant... for viewing the excesses of the Roman provincial administration through the lens of sexual misconduct."

nearby Vitellian camp (3.27).³⁷⁵ Not incidentally, this is the same speech which preceded Civilis' initial solicitation of oaths discussed in the previous section. Thus, Civilis' imitations of Antonius Primus' tactics concerning greed and plunder run concurrent with his imitations of Mucianus' tactics concerning oaths. And, just as we saw with Civilis' imitations of Mucianus, his similarity to Primus is tempered by an occasional tendency to act the barbarian, thus serving to restore Roman identity in the face of a foreign enemy.

Tacitus highlights the acquisitiveness and virtual barbarity of Antonius Primus' army by noting that the peaceful city of Cremona was in the midst of a market day when the Roman legions sacked and plundered it (3.32.2).³⁷⁶ Now, in these early days of the Batavian revolt, Tacitus employs similar rhetorical coloring in order to heighten the distinction between the grasping Batavians and the victimized Romans. After the Canninefates and the Frisians attack and plunder the winter camp of two Roman cohorts (*direpta castra*, 4.15.2), they proceed to hunt down and kill even the surrounding merchants, who were "spread out as one does in a time of peace" (*vagos et pacis modo effusos*, 4.15.2-3). By mentioning the disruption and suffering of the local merchants—especially in an episode almost completely devoid of detail otherwise—Tacitus amplifies the victimhood and unpreparedness of a largely peaceful place (the Roman territory), while simultaneously stressing the barbarism of the aggressor (the Germans).

CIVILIS AND THE SIEGE AT VETERA

When the Vitellians at the legionary camp Vetera refuse to join the (nominally) Flavian cohorts led by Civilis (4.21.1-2), the Germans dig in for a protracted siege. The siege occurs in three stages throughout the book (4.21-23, 29-30, 59-60). This section is concerned with the first two

³⁷⁵ See Ch. 3, p. 101-6.

³⁷⁶ See Ch. 3, p. 112.

stages only; the third stage will be discussed in Part 2 below. The rebels' actions and motivations during the siege's first stage (4.21-23) echo those of Antonius Primus and his army at Cremona, and thereby continue to reinforce the idea that the Batavian Revolt is in some sense a reenactment of the Flavian Challenge. But, by the second stage (4.29-30), Tacitus once again begins to reinforce the distinct Roman identity of the besieged and the markedly barbarian identity of the besiegers. Thus, though the siege of the Vetera camp makes it clearer than ever that Civilis' successes reflect on the Flavians' in disturbing and dangerous ways, it is concurrently made clear that Roman identity is, at this point, yet something distinct.

Even before the siege begins, the stage is set much as it had been at the Second Battle of Cremona. Not only are the opposing sides of both conflicts playing comparable parts—in both battles, a force deputized to fight for Vespasian assaults legions loyal to Vitellius—but both conflicts are roughly contemporaneous. What most meaningfully cements the comparison, however, is the close attention to detail paid in the Vetera narrative to replicating the motivations of Antonius Primus' army. From the outset, we are told that the coalition of German forces is compelled to attack for two reasons: “plunder and glory” (*ad praedam famamque*, 4.21.2). This coupled motivation, though exhibited in Primus' men (3.60.2), is too typical of Tacitus' civil war armies generally to evoke any specific intratextual correspondences: the Vitellian army of Valens, for instance, is said to possess the same desires (*ferox praeda gloriaque exercitus*, 1.51.1).³⁷⁷ However, once battle is joined at Vetera, Tacitus evokes the motivations of the Second Battle of Cremona in great detail:

Batavi Transrhenanique, quo discreta virtus manifestius spectaretur, sibi quaeque gens consistent, eminus lacessentes. post ubi pleraque telorum turribus pinnisque moenium inrita haerebant et desuper saxis vulnerabantur, clamore atque impetu invasere vallum, adpositis plerique scalis, alii per testudinem suorum; scandebantque iam quidam, cum gladiis et armorum incussu praecipitati sudibus

³⁷⁷ See Ch. 3, pp. 124-25.

et pilis obruuntur, praeferoces initio et rebus secundis nimii. [3] sed tum praedae cupidine adversa quoque tolerabant, machinas etiam, insolitum sibi, ausi. (4.23.2-3)

The Batavians and Germans from across the Rhine, so that their distinct virtues could be seen more clearly, drew themselves up into formation by tribe, and assailed Vetera from a distance. After that, when most of their spears hung uselessly from the turrets and wings of the walls and they themselves were being wounded by rocks from above, they stormed the rampart in a noisy onrush. Most put up ladders, while others climbed up on a *testudo* formation of their own men. Some were already climbing when they were hurled back down by swords and the clashing of arms, and then smothered by pikes and javelins. In the beginnings of battles, they were impetuous and immoderate due to their successes. [3] But, in this instance, they were also able to handle adversity by means of their desire for plunder, even daring to use machines of war with which they were unaccustomed.³⁷⁸

Many elements of this scene recall details from the attack on the legionary camp near Cremona: a concern among the soldiers to distinguish themselves from the pack (*quo discreta virtus manifestius spectaretur*, 4.23.2 ~ *ut descretus labor fortesque distingueret atque ipsa contentione decoris accenderentur*, 3.27.1); rolling rocks from above onto the besiegers (*desuper saxis vulnerabantur*, 4.23.2 ~ *pondera saxorum Vitelliani provolvunt*, 3.27.3); forming tortoise-formations (*per testudinem*, 4.23.2 ~ *fluitantemque testudinem*, 3.27.3), and so on. That many of these similarities speak as much to a shared historiographical language of sieges as to deliberate intratextual engagement is probable.³⁷⁹ But Tacitus does not rely wholly on formula in order to explain the soldiers' fervor. In fact, the historian's assessment of the motivations of the German soldiers—*sed tum praedae cupidine adversa quoque tolerabant* (4.23.3)—contains a firm, intratextual resonance with the calculus of Antonius Primus' legions: *omnisque caedes et vulnera et sanguis aviditate praedae pensabantur* ("all slaughter, wounds and shedding of blood was

³⁷⁸ Chilver (1985) 43: "[I]t is likely that the *auxilia* in the attack were less used to siege-work than the legions, and many of the force were Transrhenan Germans. Whether or not they had ever seen siege-engines at work, they had probably never constructed or employed them."

³⁷⁹ On stock scenes in Roman historiography, see Woodman (1988). On intratextuality and self-referentiality in Tacitus, see Woodman (1979) and Joseph (2012), esp. 6, 115-20, 169-79.

compensated for by their greed for plunder,” 3.26.3).³⁸⁰ *adversa* (4.23.3) recalls in compressed form the *caedes et vulnera et sanguis* of the earlier episode. *sed* and *quoque* signal that stereotypes about German ferocity (*praeferoces*), lack of endurance (*initio*), and inability to self-regulate (*rebus secundis nimii*) do not alone provide the full picture; similarly, *tum* signals a shift from the realm of stereotype to immediate, specific causation. Thus, Tacitus’ effort to highlight the Batavians’ willingness to suffer for their greed is unmistakable.

Though Tacitus’ employment of the book 3 motif of *praedae cupido* frames these German rebels in Flavian terms, Civilis’ forces, unlike Primus’, fail to breach the rampart and win a swift victory (4.23.4). They decide to rely instead on their ability to create a food shortage, which would shatter the loyalties (*fides*) of the besieged (4.23.4). In other words, the Germans hope that, in lieu of military victory and conversion at sword-point, they could exert enough stress on the Vitellians that they, holed up and starving, would abandon their allegiance to Rome. We will recall that, despite Civilis’ professions of loyalty to Vespasian (4.21.1), the Vitellians see through the ruse, recognize Civilis as a non-Roman “traitor” (*proditoris*) and “enemy” (*hostium*), and pledge to “keep their weapons and loyalty (*fides*) till their final breath” (4.21.2). Given the Vitellians’ strong sense of identity as Romans and loyalty to their emperor, Civilis has his work cut out for him.

As the siege moves into its second stage (4.29-30), Tacitus seems to validate the Vitellians’ stubborn defiance and steadfast loyalty to Rome by bringing Civilis’ barbarian and German identity to the fore. This is an identity which Civilis himself fiercely cultivated. For he ordered punitive plundering against two tribes, the Ubii and Treviri, for the crime of “renouncing

³⁸⁰ Cf. *insitam praedandi cupidinem* (“inborn desire to plunder,” 3.32.1). The precise phrase *praedae cupidine* appears also (in inverted order) in Tacitus’ digressive account of the Rhoxolani’s failed incursion into Moesia (1.79.2). Cf. also *praedae magis quam pugnae intenta* (“more intent on plunder than on fighting,” 1.79.1).

their homeland” (*eiurata patria*, 4.28.1) and, in the case of the Ubii, for preferring to be called by their Roman name.³⁸¹ The Ubii, Tacitus tells us, were subdued (4.28.3). Now, “fiercer owing to his successes in these affairs” (*successu rerum ferocior*, 4.28.3), Civilis renews his offensive against the legionary camp. In Tacitus’ description of this *bellum externum*, stereotypical descriptions of German behavior abound—almost to the point of absurdity. Tacitus paints a grotesque image which collapses together several common barbarian tropes—love of feasting, drunkenness, rashness in battle, and excessive conspicuousness in appearance:

congestis circum lignis accensisque, simul epulantes, ut quisque vino incaluerat, ad pugnam temeritate inani ferebantur. quippe ipsorum tela per tenebras vana: Romani conspicuam barbarorum aciem, et si quis audacia aut insignibus effulgens, ad ictum destinabant. (4.29.1)

They piled up logs all around and set them on fire. Simultaneous with their feast and while each man was warm with wine, they were moved to attack out of inane recklessness. Indeed, their spears were pointless in the shadows. The Romans fixed on the barbarians’ conspicuous battle-line, and struck a blow against anyone whose boldness or insignia glinted.

simul provides vivid color, for it suggests, somewhat comically, that the fighting and feasting somehow melded into a single activity.³⁸² Later in the battle, the Roman-style levelheadedness and experience of the Vitellians is mentioned admiringly and in direct contrast to the Germans’ “incoherent fury” (*inconsulta ira*, 4.29.3). Going up against such an unruly barbarian foe, these Vitellians achieve the simple, laudatory designation of *miles Romanus* (4.29.3); in this moment, Tacitus implies, these Vitellians are engaged in an actual *bellum externum*. Crucially, however, even when the assault is beaten back, Civilis *still* “tries to undermine the loyalty of the legions with messages and promises” (*nuntiis et promissis fidem legionum convellens*, 4.30.2). Thus, as

³⁸¹ The Ubii had a long tradition of loyalty to Rome dating back to the time of Caesar’s Gallic campaigns. For a concise summary of the relationship, see Chilver (1985) 45.

³⁸² Cf. Heubner (1976) 71: “die Partizipialkonjunktion...betont die Gleichzeitigkeit des allgemeinen Zechgelages und des jähren Losstürmens einzelner oder einzelner Gruppen in den Kampf...”

the second panel of the siege at Vetera comes to a close, the effort to undermine Roman loyalty continues to lurk.

We have seen in PART 1 of this chapter that Civilis is a dangerous, transgressive, and inconsistent figure: he is capable of acting like a threatening external enemy, while simultaneously imitating Roman ways and even claiming to fight alongside Romans. Nevertheless, when push comes to shove, Civilis will often act the barbarian, thus partially alleviating the anxieties of this inherently “mixed war” (*bellum permixtum*, 1.1.2) and allowing aspects of legitimate *bellum externum* to shine through. Furthermore, the Vitellians, in the midst of a bitter civil war against the Flavian challengers, prove themselves unwilling to allow Civilis’ boundary-blurring ways erode their own sense of Roman identity. However, in PART 2, we will see Roman identity tested and violated in outrageous ways, as the *sacramentum* experiences its worst degradation yet.

PART 2: The Second Phase of Revolt

In order to define when the second phase of the Batavian Revolt begins, it will be useful first to say a few words about the complex chronology of the Vetera siege narrative. The relationship between the German rebels of book 4 and the Flavians of books 2-3 operates on two different levels. On the level of *narrative* chronology, the actions of the Batavian rebels at the siege of Vetera postdate and continue the phenomenon discussed in PART 1, wherein a non-Roman force reenacts, imitates, and mirrors Roman tactics and attitudes which have already been narrated in previous books. Yet, on the level of *historical* chronology, Tacitus makes clear that the two factions’ narratives overlap considerably. When Civilis begins his revolt against Rome,

Vespasian is still waging war against Vitellius.³⁸³ And, when the growing anti-Vitellian (read: anti-Roman) coalition of Germans first lay siege to the legionary camp at Vetera (4.21), Antonius Primus' army has not yet sacked Cremona: according to Tacitus, once Civilis gives up trying to take Vetera by force and digs back in for a protracted blockade (4.30.2), word spreads throughout the northern provinces that Cremona has fallen at the hands of the Flavian Antonius Primus (4.31.1).³⁸⁴

The Second Battle of Cremona is just as much a watershed in book 4 as it was in book 3. For it is upon receipt of the news of its destruction in northern Europe that the aims and loyalties of the ongoing Batavian Revolt begin to shift radically. These shifts happen on several fronts: The Vitellian legions, who have repeatedly expressed a stubborn desire to stay loyal to their feckless leader, *still* find it difficult to accept swearing allegiance to the new regime, even after Vitellius dies. With the Flavians soon to become the sole imperial claimant, Civilis realizes it is no longer possible to pretend to serve them to advance his separatist cause, and thus declares open war against the Roman state in the person of Vespasian. By doing so, he inaugurates the closest thing to a pure *bellum externum* in the *Histories* thus far. Meanwhile, Civilis expands his base of support into Gaul, where ambitious men have their own agenda; Civilis' and his new Gallic allies' visions for a future without Roman rule do not perfectly align. Such dense, complex historiographical narratives are woven together and told from many perspectives, occasionally with great attention to detail. But they are neither aimless nor unfocused. I argue

³⁸³ Civilis starts his movement probably in September; cf. Brunt (1960) 513. Vitellius died on 20 December; cf. Chilver (1985) 62.

³⁸⁴ Brunt (1960) 515 places the start of the siege in late September, and lasting into the middle of October. Tacitus' decision to explicitly align the re-entrenchment of Civilis' besiegers with news of Cremona's fall is further evidence that the narrative of the former was intended to invoke the latter. Wellesley (1957) 244-45 dates Flavian victory at Cremona to 24/25 October. So, according to Brunt (1960) 514, "[t]he news could well have reached Hordeonius at Neuss...very early in November.... The events described in 4.13-30 may then be placed between early September and early November."

that Tacitus marshals these events in order to tell one devastating, overriding story: that in the darkest moments of the *bellum permixtum*, which itself is the dark (presumable) conclusion of three civil wars (*trina bella civilia*, 1.2.1), many Roman soldiers forsake their Roman loyalties and swear their allegiance to a foreign enemy (4.57.3), thereby triggering an identity crisis unequalled even in the bloodiest confusion of books 1-3.

HAVING A HARD TIME LETTING GO

In order to place this most shameful of oaths in the *Histories* in its proper context, it will be necessary to trace the story of the Vitellian legions who swore it. During the Vitellio-Flavian war, Hordeonius Flaccus, the legate of Upper Germany appointed by Galba to replace Verginius Rufus (1.9), clashed repeatedly with his legions because, as Tacitus sums up, “[t]he common soldiers were without doubt loyal to Vitellius, while the senior officers favored Vespasian” (*haud dubie gregarius miles Vitellio fides, splendidissimus quisque in Vespasium proni*, 4.27.3).³⁸⁵ So, when word of Antonius Primus’ victory at Cremona reached Germany, Flaccus seized upon the opportunity to “compel” (*adigente*, 4.31.2) his men to swear allegiance to Vespasian. In the *Histories*, Tacitus consistently demonstrates that one cannot *force* an army to hold to an allegiance without their willing consent. *sacramenta* are successful because they give official sanction to genuinely felt loyalties (*fides*). In the case of Flaccus’ army, the sullen soldiers do not mutiny; instead, they merely go through the motions of oath practice half-heartedly—a clear and ominous sign that Vitellius is still in their hearts:³⁸⁶

³⁸⁵ See Damon (2003) 118 for a concise summary of Hordeonius Flaccus’ career and characterization in the *Histories*.

³⁸⁶ Stäcker (2003) 304 (rightly) looks to this scene as a prime example of the personal orientation of the *sacramentum* during the principate: an oath of loyalty is sworn to an individual man, and so their ongoing affection for Vitellius makes it hard for them to say the name “Vespasian.”

vetus miles cunctabatur. sed adigente Hordeonio Flacco, instantibus tribunis, dixit sacramentum, non voltu neque animo satis adfirmans, et cum cetera iuris iurandi verba conciperent, Vespasiani nomen haesitantes aut levi murmure et plerumque silentio trans mittebant. (4.31.2)³⁸⁷

The veteran soldiers hesitated [to switch their loyalty from Vitellius to Vespasian]. But at Hordeonius Flaccus' pressing and the tribunes' insisting, they spoke the oath of allegiance, though giving no confirmation with their expressions or dispositions. And though they repeated all the rest of the oaths' words, they hesitated at Vespasian's name: some murmured it softly while most passed it over in silence.

With this insincere oath, a rift has been created between the soldiers' actions and their feelings—between their *official* allegiance and their *actual* allegiance, we might say. Though these soldiers have not lost their fondness for Vitellius, they are now officially waging war against the Batavians under a Flavian banner. I would suggest that this internal rebellion in the hearts of the soldiers is a further manifestation of the *bellum permixtum*: outwardly, these Roman legions are tasked with fighting a foreign enemy; inwardly, the Vitellio-Flavian civil war rages on. The Roman civil war cannot truly come to an end until the loyalties of these Vitellian legions are won, outwardly *and* inwardly.

It does not take long for this inner civil war to resurface. After a series of battles (some won, some lost) against Civilis (4.33-35), Flaccus and one Dillius Vocula, legate of the Twenty-Second Legion,³⁸⁸ suffer a mutiny at the hands of these discontented legions at Novaesium (4.36).³⁸⁹ Though the legions had been reluctant to swear allegiance to Vespasian (4.31.2), it

³⁸⁷ Cf. Tacitus' description of a legislative dispute in the senate earlier in book 4: *eam sententiam modestissimus quisque silentio, deinde oblivio transmisit* ("all the most moderate men passed over this proposal in silence; then it was forgotten," 4.9.2).

³⁸⁸ What we know about his career comes from a tomb set up by his widow; see MacCrumb and Woodhead (1961) 38 (=ILS 983). On the Spanish (Corduba) origins of the Dillii, see Syme (1958) 785.

³⁸⁹ There is some uncertainty regarding where the mutiny took place. At the beginning of the paragraph, we learn that Vocula "came to Gelduba and from there to Novaesium" (*Geldubam atque inde Novaesium*, 4.36.1); but then he "captured Gelduba" (*Civilis capit Geldubam*, 4.36.1) and fought a cavalry battle "away from" (*procul*) Novaesium (4.36.1). Chilver (1985) 48-49 points out that *Civilis capit Geldubam* must be a gloss, and that Flaccus "seems" to be in Novaesium at 31.2 and is "certainly murdered" there (4.36.2).

takes a problem with the donative to spark an outright mutiny. The scene unfolds as follows:³⁹⁰ the legions discover that Vitellius had earlier sent funds to cover a donative, and, of course, upon learning this, demand to be paid (*donativum exposcunt*, 4.36.1). Flaccus forks over the money immediately—perhaps having learned from recent events not to trifle with angry soldiers demanding a “gift.” But in so doing, he makes a costly error: “...Hordeonius Flaccus gave [the donative] in Vespasian’s name, and this in particular was what incubated a mutiny” (*Hordeonius nomine Vespasiani dedit, idque praecipuum fuit seditionis alimentum*, 4.36.2). The legionaries, reveling in their outrage, drag Flaccus from his bedroom tent and kill him (4.36.2). Vocula escapes death by hiding in slave clothes (4.36.2)—an act of survival which stands in stark contrast to his later willingness to die.³⁹¹

The details of this mutiny reveal a serious problem for Vespasian. The legions have refused to accept fully the *sacramentum* imposed on them by Flavian partisans, since the attendant *donativum* does not reflect their inner (i.e., Vitellian) *fides*. In other words, these legionaries care more that their fondness for Vitellius be reflected in the nature of their remuneration than that they get paid at all. They never considered their *sacramentum* to Vespasian legitimate, and, presumably because of these feelings, bristled when their commanders tried to pass off a *donativum* of Vitellius’ money as emanating from Vespasian. Thus, the Flavian commanders may at this point have nominal power over Vitellius’ old legions, but they utterly fail to reach a new *Flavian sacramentum-donativum* contract with them. Galba’s failure was one of stinginess in the eyes of the soldiery; Flaccus’ is one of imposture and illegitimacy.

³⁹⁰ Levick (1999) 109: “Hordeonius administered the oath of loyalty, but misjudged his troops’ fidelity. While the struggle for Vetera went on, a donative offered in Vespasian’s name merely provoked the troops at Novaesium...to a mutiny in which Hordeonius fell.”

³⁹¹ The same tactic which the Vitellian general Valens had used to escape mutiny; cf. 2.29.3.

The mutiny ends quietly and without much gain. As Civilis bears down on them (*adventante Civile*, 4.37.1), some of the mutineers take flight (*in fugam vertuntur*, 4.37.1), while some others try to “dissociate themselves from their own cause” (*erant causam suam dissociantibus*, 4.37.2).³⁹² Yet love of Vitellius had by no means abated: his statuary was re-erected, even though, as Tacitus points out, at this point he was already dead (4.37.2)! Nevertheless, the mutiny draws to an official close when the mutineers abruptly re-swear allegiance to Vespasian:

dein mutati in paenitentiam primani quartanique et duoetvicensimani Voculam sequuntur, apud quem resumpto Vespasiani sacramento ad liberandum Mogontiaci obsidium ducebantur. ... [3] quin et lorica vallumque per fines suos Treveri struxere, magnisque in vicem cladibus cum Germanis certabant, donec egregia erga populum Romanum merita mox rebelles foedarent. (4.37.2-3)

Then, the first, fourth, and twenty-second legions, in an about-face, repented and followed Vocula, in whose presence they swore their allegiance to Vespasian once again. They were led off to try to lift the siege of Mogontiacum. ... [3] Moreover, the Treviri built a parapet and rampart along their own border, and fought the Germans with heavy losses on both sides—that is, until their rebellion befouled their outstanding service to the Roman people.

Given the drawn-out and dramatic account of the mutiny, Tacitus’ unadorned and unexplained *mutati* and his matter-of-fact reporting of this second Vespasianic *sacramentum* are jarring.

These legions’ difficult history with Vespasian—the very thing which sparked the mutiny in the first place—would seem to preclude such a simple resolution. Indeed, they have already resisted internalizing their compulsory oaths to Vespasian; they have shown themselves dissatisfied with donatives given in Vespasian’s name; they have mutinied from Vespasian, in the process killing high-ranking men loyal to him. Given all this recent (and ongoing) tension, I argue that the quick

³⁹² This part of the narrative is quite condensed, and in the absence of another source to corroborate, it must remain unclear what *adventante Civile* and *in fugam vertuntur* mean precisely. Chilver (1985) 49 is condemnatory: “The whole of this chapter...seems hurried and ill composed.”

and undramatic resumption of the Flavian oath rings hollow, and was likely meant to do so.³⁹³

The grammatical subordination of the resumed oath (*resumpto Vespasiani sacramento*, 4.37.2) to the coming showdown at Mogontiacum further eclipses the importance of alleged reconciliation and oath-bound unity. Tacitus has constructed the end of this scene in such a way that any true or meaningful resolution of the mutiny *feels* unachieved, and therefore that the legions' loyalty to Vespasian rests on shaky ground. The externalized and distant perspective of the brief phrase *mutati in paenitentiam* (4.37.2) elides any mention of internal loyalties, such that we can only guess at the sincerity of the change. The historian, much like the Vitellians who skip over Vespasian's name as they recite their oath (4.31.2), conveys meaning from silence.

IN EXTERNA VERBA IURARENT

As news of Vitellius' death continues to spread, Tacitus warns that Vespasian would now face a new set of challenges. These challenges would arise on both foreign and domestic fronts—a sign that the *bellum permixtum* would continue to persist:

audita interim per Gallias [et] Germaniasque mors Vitelli duplicaverat bellum. nam Civilis omissa dissimulatione in populum Romanum ruere, Vitellianae legiones vel externum servitium quam imperatorem Vespasianum malle. Galli sustulerant animos, eandem ubique exercituum nostrorum fortunam rati... (4.54.1)

Meanwhile, news of the death of Vitellius spreading through Gaul and Germany expanded the war. For Civilis dropped all pretense and attacked the Roman people head on; the Vitellian legions preferred even foreign slavery over having Vespasian as emperor. The Gauls had lifted their spirits, believing that the same misfortune extended to our entire army...

As the passage continues to unfold, we are told that the burning of the Capitol had stoked

Druidic prophecies of Rome's demise (5.54.2-3).³⁹⁴ But Tacitus has framed his discussion such

³⁹³ Commentators seem not to be particularly troubled by the abrupt resolution of this mutiny. See, e.g., Levick (1999) 109: "Vocula *succeeded* in obtaining the allegiance of I, IV Macedonica, and XXII" [emphasis added].

³⁹⁴ See Ch. 3, p. 120 for a discussion of this passage's role in portraying the destroyers of Cremona as barbaric.

that the “expansion of the war” (*duplicaverat bellum*, 4.54.1) does not merely refer to the Gauls’ defection, but indeed also to the fact that Civilis had become openly inimical to Rome, and that some *Vitellianae legiones* (4.54.1), a reference to Dillius Vocula’s army, were willing to join him.³⁹⁵ It is remarkable, and of obvious morbid interest to Tacitus, that all three parties in question—Civilis and his German allies, the newly rebellious Gauls, and Vitellius’ former legions under Vocula’s command—pose a threat to Flavian hegemony.

Tacitus couches the initial conspiratorial measures taken by these “rebellious” (*rebelles*, 4.37.3) Treviri in terms of oaths. A small cadre of Gallic nobles—namely, the Treviran Julius Classicus and Julius Tutor, and the Lingonian Julius Sabinus—meet secretly in Cologne to strategize. There, they agree that, since every aspect of Roman society is in a state of disrepair, a Gaul united both with itself and with Civilis’ existing rebellion could decide its own fate (4.55.4). Tacitus refers to this consensus agreement as a *coniuratio* (4.55.1). The term *coniuratio* is used only four other times in the extant *Histories*, all in book 1 in reference to the Othonian conspiracy against Galba (1.27, 32, 33, 42). Even though the sense here, and in the passages of book 1, is “conspiracy” (*OLD* s.v. 2), we must recognize that its primary meaning, “a swearing together” (*OLD* s.v. 1) may be active as well.³⁹⁶ While perhaps not terribly meaningful in its own right, the element of oath-taking in the language of the Gauls’ conspiracy foreshadows the central role oaths will play in the following chapters.

Once the conspirators have decided to get out from under the Roman yoke, they debate how to handle Vocula’s legions. Some believe they ought to be wiped out, seeing as they are

³⁹⁵ This “doubling” can hardly be literal. Heubner’s (1976) 129 translation seems to capture the sense well: “hatte die Wucht des Krieges verdoppelt.”

³⁹⁶ Linderski (1984) 76-77 argues that, in the Republic, a *coniuratio* was simply a temporary oath sworn to unite soldiers in a common purpose, whereas a *sacramentum* was an oath sworn by levied soldiers to an *imperium*-holder. On the distinction between *coniuratio* as oath and *coniuratio* as conspiracy, see Pagán (2004) 10-14.

“misbehaved, disloyal, and stained with the blood of their generals” (*turbidos infidos sanguine ducum pollutos*, 4.56.1)—a fairly accurate and concise summary of their role in book 4 thus far, so long as we understand *infidos Vespasiano*.³⁹⁷ Others think it would be better to “entice” (*adlicendos*, 4.56.1) the *milites* into the Gallic ranks while simultaneously killing their unloved commanders. The legions’ mutinous history suggests that such a measure may well succeed, and so the strategy of enticement carries. It is as if the Gallic rebels, weighing Tacitus’ book 4 account of these legions’ unstable loyalty (*fides*), saw that their *sacramentum* to Vespasian would be easy to break. Significantly, when introducing the topic of debate, the Gauls refer to the legions not as “Flavian” or “Vespasianic” but as “the remnants of the Vitellian army” (*de reliqui<i>s Vitelliani exercitus*, 4.56.1). The Gauls, ironically, have more insight into the true allegiances of Vocula’s army than does Vocula, who earlier (apparently) accepted their abrupt and unexplained re-swearing of loyalty as sincere (4.37.2).

Despite his ignorance, Vocula alone stands between the Gauls and his discontented legions. He understands, moreover, that his own legions’ “inconsistency and disloyalty” (*infrequentibus infidisque*, 4.56.2) preclude confronting the rebels directly and with force. Thus, he decides to launch a campaign of intrigue of his own (4.56.2-57.2). But, as Vocula quickly finds out, no amount of intrigue or persuasion can sway the Gauls to cease their *perfidia* (4.57.3). When Vocula retreats in failure to Novaesium, the Gallic rebels, whose position is even more secure after having made a “firm agreement” (*pacta firmavere*, 4.57.1) with the Germans,³⁹⁸ set up their own camp two miles from the Roman one (4.57.3). Yet the spatial difference between

³⁹⁷ Though plural, the primarily referent of *ducum* is certainly Hordeonius Flaccus, who was murdered in a mutiny (4.36.2); see Heubner (1976) 132. *turbidos* and *infidos* certainly describe their behavior otherwise at 4.36-37.

³⁹⁸ Similar language reappears later when Civilis negotiates a treaty with Colonia Agrippinensium: *arbitrium habebimus Civilem et Veledam, apud quos pacta sancientur* (“Civilis and Veleda will be the arbiters of our proposals, and they shall negotiate and witness the agreement,” 4.65.3); cf. *per nuntios pacta perfidiae firmaret* (“[Caecina] secured his pact of treachery through emissaries,” 3.9.2).

the two camps proves ineffective in preventing defection—not only from the Roman camp, but from Roman identity itself:

illuc commeantium centurionum militumque emebantur animi, ut (flagitium incognitum) Romanus exercitus in externa verba iurarent pignusque tanti sceleris nece aut vinculis legatorum daretur. (4.57.3)

The minds and hearts of the centurions and soldiers who went over there were bought, with the result that the Roman army—an unheard-of outrage!—swore a foreign oath of allegiance and that, as a pledge of such a wicked act, the legates would be killed or handed over in chains.

The Gallic strategy of enticement works. In four books full of broken oaths, mutinies, and general civil strife, a Roman army who would *willingly* swear an oath of allegiance to a non-Roman power is a new level of obscenity. The narrator’s parenthetical comment—*flagitium incognitum*—forcefully endorses this sad fact.³⁹⁹ *emebantur* is a loaded term, for it appears throughout the *Histories* in reference to monetary bribes which compromise one’s integrity and proper (sense of) loyalty: Galba, in an attempt to explain why he would not be paying a donative, proudly proclaimed that “his soldiers would be selected, not bought” (*legi a se militem, non emi*, 1.5.2).⁴⁰⁰ Later, Otho is said to have bought (*emptum*) property, which he in turn gifted to a member of Galba’s bodyguard as a bid to break his loyalty to the emperor (1.24.2).⁴⁰¹ Valens was believed by his soldiers to have been improperly “bought off” (*emptum*) by the Gallic cities which escaped destruction at his hands (1.66.2). Vitellius’ did not attend Nero’s music recitals out of compulsion, as the best men did, but because he was “bought by, and delivered up as the possession of Nero’s extravagant appetites” (*luxu et saginae mancipatus emptusque*, 2.71.1). Here, in the case of the defection of Vocula’s legions, *emo* not only signifies that the legions

³⁹⁹ *incognitus* (“unknown”) is sometimes equated to *nefarius*, *dirus*, *perversus* (TLL vii/963.83-88); cf. Stat. *Theb.* 11.125 and Tac. A. 11.26.1.

⁴⁰⁰ See Suet. *G.* 16.1 for the phrasing; see Plut. *G.* 18.2 and Cass. Dio 64.3.3 for the sentiment.

⁴⁰¹ For a similar usage of *emo* in Otho’s scheming, cf. 1.46.3.

accepted illicit bribes in their defection, but, given the immediate vicinity of the words *in externa verba iurarent*, suggests that they have accepted what they refused to accept from Vocula and Vespasian (4.37): donatives in exchange for oaths. The defectors' new loyalty to the Gallic rebels rests on firmer ground than it ever did with the Flavians.

VOCULA'S LAST STAND

Tacitus channels his evident outrage at the legions' unprecedented betrayal of Roman identity through Vocula, who, in a long speech addressed to an assembly of all the soldiers (*vocata contione*, 4.57.3), warns that the very fabric of Roman order threatens to be subverted. For Vocula—and for Tacitus as well—the proper and effective functioning of the *sacramentum* process represents the health of Roman military society. This speech, which seeks to dissuade what would be the most egregious violation of the *sacramentum* to this point in the *Histories*, is a critical and dramatic moment in the longstanding conflict between loyalty and disloyalty, between mutiny and obedience, and between the common soldiers' desire for monetary compensation and the ruling classes' desire to formalize their dominant position with oaths. Yet, it is also the case, as we shall see, that Vocula's ethical blind-spots preclude identifying him as a simple mouthpiece for authorial frustration. In order to discuss this speech in the detail it deserves, I reproduce it here in full.⁴⁰²

“numquam apud vos verba feci aut pro vobis sollicitior aut pro me securior. nam mihi exitium parari libens audio mortemque in tot malis [hostium] ut finem miseriarum exspecto: vestri me pudet miseretque, adversus quos non proelium et acies parantur; id enim fas armorum et ius hostium est: bellum cum populo Romano vestris se manibus gesturum Classicus sperat imperiumque et sacramentum Galliarum ostentat. [2] adeo nos, si fortuna in praesens virtusque deseruit, etiam vetera exempla deficiunt, quotiens Romanae legiones perire praeoptaverint, ne loco pellerentur? socii saepe nostri excindi urbes suas seque cum coniugibus ac liberis cremari pertulerunt, neque aliud pretium exitus quam fides famamque. [3]

⁴⁰² On Vocula's speech, see Haynes (2003) 159-61.

tolerant cum maxime inopiam obsidiumque apud Vetera legiones nec terrore aut promissis demovetur: nobis super arma et viros et egregia castrorum munimenta frumentum et commeatus quamvis longo bello pares. pecunia nuper etiam donativo suffecit, quod sive a Vespasiano sive a Vitellio datum interpretari mavoltis, ab imperatore certe Romano accepistis. [4] tot bellorum victores, apud Geldubam, apud Vetera, fuso totiens hoste si pavetis aciem, indignum id quidem, sed est vallum murique et trahendi artes, donec e proximis provinciis auxilia exercitusque concurrant. Sane ego displiceam: sunt alii legati, tribuni, centurio denique aut miles. [5] ne hoc prodigium toto terrarum orbe volgetur, vobis satellitibus Civilem et Classicum Italiam invasuros. an, si ad moenia urbis Germani Gallique duxerint, arma patriae inferetis? horret animus tanti flagitii imagine. Tutorine Treviro agentur excubiae? Signum belli Batavus dabit? et Germanorum catervas supplebitis? quis deinde sceleris exitus, cum Romanae legiones contra derexerint? Transfugae e transfugis et proditores e proditoribus inter recens et vetus sacramentum invisi deis errabitis? [6] te, Iuppiter optime maxime, quem per octigentos viginti annos tot triumphis coluimus, te, Quirine, Romanae parens urbis, precor venerorque ut, si vobis non fuit cordi me duce haec castra incorrupta et intemerata servari, at certe pollui foedarique a Tutore et Classico ne sinatis, militibus Romanis aut innocentiam detis aut maturam et sine noxa paenitentiam.” (4.58.1-6)

“Never have I spoken to you feeling more nervous for you or more sure of myself. For I am glad to hear that you are plotting to kill me; amid such evils, I long for death as an end to my miseries: I am ashamed of you and feel sorry for you—you who face no military engagement or line of battle. That is to say, the *fas armorum* and the *ius hostium*. Classicus hopes that he can wage a war against the Roman people by means of your hands, and presents you with the *imperium* and *sacramentum* of the Gauls. [2] Even if luck and courage have deserted us for the moment, have the examples of antiquity so fallen away from us that we have forgotten how many Roman legions have chosen to die rather than be made to abandon their post? Even allies of ours⁴⁰³ have often endured the destruction of their cities and their own incineration alongside their wives and children, nor was there any reward for their death other than *fides* and *fama*. [3] The legions at Vetera are enduring the greatest scarcity of resources possible, and are not being swayed by fear or promises. In addition to arms, men, and outstanding camp-defenses, we have enough provisions for however long the war drags on. Recently, there was even enough money for a donative. Whether you prefer to see this donative as coming from Vespasian or Vitellius, you certainly got it from a Roman emperor. [4] It is quite disgraceful if you—as victors of so many campaigns, after so many of the enemy have been brought down at Gelduba, at Vetera—are afraid to fight. You have a rampart, and walls, and the ability to drag out the fighting until auxiliaries and legions arrive from nearby provinces. You might not like me, but

⁴⁰³ If *socii* means “allies,” as Wellesley (2009) 221 suggests, then its primary position makes it quite emphatic (“even *allies* of ours,” *vel sim.*). Which *socii* might he have in mind? Heubner (1976) 136 suggests the Saguntines, who “honored their loyalty as allies unto their own demise” (*fidem socialem usque ad perniciem suam coluerunt*, Liv. 21.7.3).

there are other legates, tribunes, and then even centurions and common soldiers (*sc.* ready to take my place). [5] Do not let your monstrous crime become known the world over, that Civilis and Classicus were going to invade Italy with you in tow. If the Germans and Gauls lead you to the walls of the City, will you bear arms against your fatherland? I shudder at the thought of such wickedness. Will the Treviran Tutor make you stand guard for him? Will a Batavian give you the signal for battle? Will you fill in the German ranks? When the Roman legions draw up against you, what end will there be the outcome of your criminality? Deserters of deserters and traitors of traitors, will you wander between your new and your ancient oath of allegiance, hated by the gods? [6] I call upon you and worship you, Jupiter the Best and the Greatest, whom we have honored in triumphs for 820 years, and you, Quirinus, the father of the City of Rome, that, if it is not in your heart that this camp be preserved uncorrupted and inviolate, you still at least do not allow it to be polluted and befouled by Tutor and Classicus. To the soldiers of Rome, grant either innocence or a timely repentance to avoid punishment.

In large part, this speech is a discourse on the proper role—as Vocula sees it—of loyalty (*fides*), oaths (*sacramenta*), and gifts (*donativa*) in Roman military life. When referring to the donative which the legions recently received (4.58.3), Vocula conveniently neglects to mention Flaccus’ dishonesty (the mutiny when Hordeonius Flaccus had given them a donative from Vitellius’ coffers in Vespasian’s name). Thus, Vocula’s argument—that, when it comes to emperors, the office trumps the man—falls flat. For if the office truly mattered more than the man, as Vocula implies, why then did Flaccus feel the need to misrepresent the source of the money or to give it in anyone’s name at all (4.36.2)? Given the logic and custom of the Roman system of *sacramenta* and *donativa*, dating back as least as far as the reign of Claudius, the legions had every right to expect that their donative would come from the same man to whom they had been forced to swear allegiance: Vespasian (4.31.2). It is no wonder, then, that Vocula shifts emphasis away from personal loyalties and towards respect for official power above all else. We might expand Vocula’s argument as follows: the donative may have come from Vitellius’ purse, but since Vespasian is emperor now, you should be content to view the money as having ultimately emanated from him, and thus you should honor him and keep your

allegiance to him. Vocula attempts to shame his men into accepting his argument, pointing out that even Rome's allies (*socii...nostri*) have been willing to give their lives when the only "reward" (*pretium*) was "loyalty and glory" (*fides famamque*, 4.58.2), thereby implying that his legions place too much value on material rewards in the first place. By downplaying his own survival (*nam mihi exitium parari libens audio mortemque in tot malis [hostium] ut finem miseriarum exspecto*, 4.58.1), Vocula participates in the common Roman motif of subordinating oneself to the national interest: "You might not like me," he concedes, "but there are other legates, tribunes, and then even centurions and common soldiers ready to take my place" (4.58.4).⁴⁰⁴ But ultimately, all of Vocula's melodramatic hand-wringing does not change the fact that, in the eyes of the soldiers, Vespasian never compensated them properly for their loyalty.⁴⁰⁵

The central purpose of Vocula's speech is not to defend how the donative was dispensed—important as the matter is to the soldiers themselves—but rather to prevent his army from defecting to the foreign enemy. In order to accomplish this, Vocula's strategy is essentially twofold: first, to point out the horror and degradation which awaits those who accept non-Romans as masters; and second, to suggest that defection would be accompanied by a loss in the status and value of the defectors. These two arguments are not distinguished from one another by the speaker in form or content, and I will discuss them together. First, Vocula asserts that, by accepting a Gallic *sacramentum*, the legions would in effect become the tools of a war waged against the Roman people (4.58.1). Then, near the middle of the speech, he equates defection to the enemy with fear of the enemy—"a disgraceful thing indeed" (4.58.4). Yet it is in the final section of the speech that Vocula makes his grandest and most dramatic arguments. In the last

⁴⁰⁴ On interpreting Vocula's self-sacrificial rhetoric through the lens of the Roman idea of *devotio*, see Aubrion (1985) 632, Keitel (1993), Edwards (2012) 255-56.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. Master (2016) 154-55, who attributes Vocula's failure to convince his men to stay loyal to his "limited" understanding of the "evolving identity of the Romans and their subjects."

several months, Vitellius' and Vespasian's Roman armies had already invaded Rome—an undeniable fact on which Vocula needs offer no comment. But the notion of Roman soldiers invading Italy as inferior subjects (*satellitibus*) to a foreign force—fighting for a German and Gallic rather than a Roman agenda—would indeed be a “monstrous crime” (*prodigium*, 4.58.5). No such war (*bellum*) could ever be classified as foreign (*externum*).

As the speech swells to a finish, Vocula turns to the divine and cosmic consequences which await defectors and oath-breakers (4.58.5-6). The imagery of wandering somewhere between two conditions of allegiance—i.e., “between your new and your ancient oath of allegiance” (*inter recens et vetus sacramentum*, 4.58.5)—suggests that, should the soldiers go through with their defection, the very idea of loyalty and oaths will become alien to them. Such rhetoric recalls the beginning of the first book and the crisis of Galba's emperorship (1.5.1, 12.1), where Tacitus had slyly suggested that it was not merely oaths which were being broken but that the institution itself lost its traditional credibility (*reverentia*). *invisi deis errabitis* is significant, since it marks the first time in the *Histories* when Tacitus explicitly highlights the divine component of the *sacramentum* evidenced in our surviving Julio-Claudian inscription.⁴⁰⁶ This rhetoric is consistent with Tacitus' tendency in the *Histories* to invoke the (absence of the) gods in moments of high narrative drama and existential crisis.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ See Ch. 1, pp. 12-13. Stäcker (2003) 302 cites *transfugae e transfugis et proditores e proditoribus inter recens et vetus sacramentum invis deis errabitis?* (4.58.5) in his discussion of the religious significance of the *sacramentum* in the Imperial period: “Desertion und damit der Bruch des *sacramentum* ein *nefas* bedeutete, also ein frevelhaftes Vergehen gegen die Götter.” He cites in evidence a passage from Seneca: *primum militiae vinculum est religio et signorum amor et deserendi nefas, tunc deinde facile cetera exiguntur mandanturque iusiurandum adactis* (“the military's primary bond is religion and the love of the standards and the unspeakable evil of desertion, then the rest is easily required and demanded of those who have been administered the oath,” *Ep.* 95.35).

⁴⁰⁷ The most notable example is when Tacitus relates that Jupiter has left his seat during the destruction of the Capitolium (3.72). For recent commentary on the role of the gods in the *Histories*, see Davies (2004) 193-211, Griffin (2009), esp. 169-70.

The connection between the *sacramentum* and the favor of the divinity becomes even more overt as the speech comes to an end. And the forecast is bleak. Though Vocula directly beseeches the gods to prevent the total moral and spiritual debasement of Rome's forces (4.58.6), he also recognizes that the gods never intended to prevent fractious infighting entirely (*si vobis non fuit cordi...*, 4.58.6)⁴⁰⁸—a grim acknowledgement that the situation is already unavoidably dire. Furthermore, though Vocula warns his army that an alliance with the Gallic rebel leaders would “pollute and befoul” (4.58.6) them, Tacitus suggests that they have already polluted themselves through constant disobedience and violence against their own commanders (*sanguine ducum pollutos*), a fact which the Gauls recognized as sufficient reason to put them to death (4.56.1). These two passages (4.56.1, 58.6) reveal that Roman soldiers can incur pollution either from betraying their commanders through mutiny and violence (4.56.1) or from following a man undeserving of loyalty (4.58.6). In the end, Vocula's army will incur both types.

As Vocula casts defection in terms of oath-breaking at the beginning of the speech (*Classicus ... imperiumque et sacramentum Galliarum ostentat*, 4.58.1), we may safely posit a connection between bad/broken oaths and pollution. We will recall that, in his programmatic listing of “coming attractions” in book 1, Tacitus includes the phrase *pollutae caerimoniae* (1.2.2). Since Tacitus pairs the phrase with *magna adulteria*, it has been assumed that *pollutae caerimoniae* refers to the adultery and execution of Vestal Virgins under Domitian.⁴⁰⁹ As likely as the reference may be, we need not restrict such a vague and programmatic phrase to one particular type of event. There is no reason to doubt that the *sacramentum* would have been among the many Roman religious and civic activities which one might categorize as *caerimoniae*

⁴⁰⁸ A common phrase for beseeching the gods: cf., e.g., *Cat. Orig.* 12 and *Liv.* 9.8.8-9, with Heubner (1976) 139.

⁴⁰⁹ See Chilver (1979) 43 on 1.1.2: “In 83 three Vestals were found guilty of adultery and were allowed to choose the manner of their deaths, their lovers being relegated; in 90 the Chief Vestal, for the same reason, was buried alive, her lover being beaten to death.”

(OLD s.v. 3). Beyond 1.2.2, *polluo* occurs infrequently in the *Histories*; and, when it does, it is never in reference to anything one might reasonably describe as a *caerimonia*.⁴¹⁰ Thus, it is plausible that *pollutae caerimoniae* (1.2.2) specifically forecasts the failings of Vocula's army with respect to loyalty and oaths. In addition, the speech as a whole is an undeniably important moment in the work-long *sacramentum* motif. Vocula's ability to appeal to his legions' sense of duty, honor, tradition, and loyalty—as he seeks to define them—is the only thing that might prevent the ultimate degradation of one of Rome's most ancient and sacralized military rituals.

In the end, however, Vocula's speech does not work. The legions defect *en masse*. Vocula contemplates killing himself, but is convinced not to do so by his freedmen. He dies anyway when Classicus sends a man to kill him (4.59.1).

It is Classicus who, upon a dramatic and strange entrance into the Roman camp, makes the late Vocula's worst fear a reality:

dein sumptis Romani imperii insignibus in castra venit. nec illi, quamquam ad omne facinus durato, verba ultra suppeditavere, quam ut sacramentum recitaret: iuravere qui aderant pro imperio Galliarum. interfectorem Voculae altis ordinibus, ceteros, ut quisque flagitium navaverat, praemiis attollit. (4.59.2)

Thereupon he entered the camp dressed in the garb of a Roman general. Though hardened to every type of crime, he could manage no words, except to recite the *sacramentum*. Those present swore to the empire of Gaul. He promoted Vocula's assassin with high honors, everyone else with rewards commensurate with their crimes.

Classicus' inability to articulate anything other than the words of a successfully-administered oath stands in contrast to Vocula's long-winded failure to prevent that oath from ever taking place. In Classicus' terseness, Tacitus alludes to tales of Rome's past in which Roman generals

⁴¹⁰ In addition to 1.2.2, 4.56.1, and 4.58.6, *polluo* appears five times in the *Histories*: 2.37.2 (referring to the personal foibles of emperors), 2.56.1 (referring to pollution incurred by rape and violence), 2.62.2 (referring to the pollution equestrians incur by performing in the gladiatorial arena), 2.76.2 (referring to the pollution Rome has suffered under Vitellius), and 3.41.1 (referring to the belief that Valens had polluted himself with his sexual misconduct).

were able to restore good faith and discipline among a mutinous army largely as a result of their high reputation and charisma. For instance, Caesar is said to have quelled a mutiny in 47 BCE simply by addressing his men as *Quirites*.⁴¹¹ Similarly, according to Polybius, Scipio, before acquiring the cognomen Africanus, was able to stop a mutiny through sheer force of reputation: “since in everything the example of his own life supported his advice, they did not require many words from him” (παράδειγμα γὰρ ἐν πᾶσι τὸν ἴδιον βίον εἰσφερόμενος οὐ πολλῶν ἐποίει προσδεῖσθαι λόγων τοὺς ἀκούοντας, Plb. 11.10.5).⁴¹² The fact that Classicus impersonates a Roman *imperium*-holder (*sumptis Romani imperii insignibus*, 4.59.2) makes the nod to such great figures more likely—and more ironic.⁴¹³ As a foreigner with a history in the auxiliaries, Classicus is not a known quantity to the legionaries; thus, he cannot, like Scipio or Caesar, merely rest on reputation. Yet Classicus’ obvious inability to fill the same role as a Caesar or a Scipio does nothing to detract from the legions’ willingness to entrust themselves to him—a Gallic traitor—at the drop of a hat, simply because he looks the part. Such blind eagerness makes the legions appear foolish in their treason.

⁴¹¹ Suet. *Caes.* 70, Plut. *Caes.* 51, Cass. Dio 42.52-53, and App. *BC* 2.92-93 all record versions of this story. Lucan transposes *Quirites* to the mutiny at Placentia two years earlier in 49 BCE (5.358). Fantham (1985) 120 and 126, who argues that the book 5 mutiny episode “serve[s] [Lucan’s] portrayal of Caesar as the embodiment of *scelus*,” believes that Lucan transposed the *Quirites* “because he did not intend to treat the second mutiny [in 47 BCE].” Chrissanthos (1999) 126-36 argues convincingly that, in reality, Caesar’s legions were well aware of the leverage they possessed and did have many of their demands met.

⁴¹² Cf. Marincola (1997) 131: “We can see the importance of character in persuasion by a glance at some of the remarks made by the historians themselves which are not methodological or self-conscious, and thus reflect the preconceptions inherent in Greek and Roman society.” Marincola also cites two examples from Livy where the opposite is true, the Roman people *not* listening to someone because the speaker is held in low esteem.

⁴¹³ There has been some dispute what *Romani imperii insignibus* precisely means. Walser (1951) argues, he was seen not as a Gallic *imperator* but as a Roman *princeps*. Chilver (1985) 69 is less certain: “[*insignibus* presumably denotes] the purple cloak, lictors, and *fascies*. Yet an ordinary provincial *legatus* had lictors and *fascies* (A. 2.69.2, 77.1), and Classicus may simply have appeared in the guise of an ordinary military commander. ... In any case, we can infer little of the nature of the revolt.” There is no reason to assume that Classicus positions himself as an emperor, as opposed to simply a man of *imperium*-holding rank (see, e.g., Sal. *Cat.* 36.1). Linderski (1984) 77 points out that, under the Republic, it was prerogative of those with *imperium* to hold levies and administer the *sacramentum*.

Leaving aside the legions' stupidity for entrusting themselves to an obvious fraud, events proceed in a fashion typical of successful oaths in the *Histories*. *iuuro* (as opposed to *adigo*) indicates that the agency rests with the oath-takers and implies a level of willingness on the part of the legions. Yet *recitaret* (~ *praeiret*; cf. 2.74.1) clearly shows Classicus in control. Immediately following upon the oath, Classicus honors custom by doling out various rewards (*altis ordinibus...praemiis*, 4.59.2). Finally, Tutor capitalizes on Classicus' success by spreading the new oath through Upper Germany (*in eadem verba adigit*, 4.59.3).⁴¹⁴ Thus, Classicus and Tutor, just like Mucianus and Civilis before them, demonstrate an ability to create and expand loyalties through coordination of oaths and bribes.

Tacitus, apparently wishing to wallow in the shameful after-effects of the foreign oath, describes the defectors' role in the rebel army. And it is even worse than Vocula feared: far from being incorporated into, or even subordinated to the rebel army (4.58.5), the legions are treated as disgraced prisoners and set on a forced march nearly a hundred miles due south to Augusta Trevirorum (Trier).⁴¹⁵ Throughout the *Histories*, Tacitus occasionally devotes space to exploring the diversity of opinions and perspectives among various classes and individuals.⁴¹⁶ This forced march is one such occasion. Though varied, Tacitus' assessment of the Roman legions—as opposed to the foreign-born cohorts—is quite damning as a whole.⁴¹⁷ Many (though not all) of the legionaries are ashamed (*rubore*) of their reduced status; these Tacitus calls the *melior pars* (4.62.1). Many others, however, are dominated by cowardice (*ignavissimus*), fear (*paventes*), lack of honor (*nulla dedecoris cura*), greed (*pecuniam*), and self-interest (*carissima sibimet*,

⁴¹⁴ Specifically Colonia Agrippinensis and Mogontiacum.

⁴¹⁵ There appears to be an inconsistency in the identity of who precisely was marched from Novaesium to Augusta Trevirorum. In the section which narrates the march, Tacitus singles out the sixteenth legion and its auxiliary units (4.62.1), but then later refers to “legions” (plural).

⁴¹⁶ See Ash (1999), esp. 21-22.

⁴¹⁷ It has long been recognized that Livy's account of the surrender at the Caudine Forks furnishes Tacitus with his literary model; see Andresen (1916) 402, Syme (1958) 685-86, Keitel (1992b) 327-37, Ash (1998).

4.62.1). Among the imprisoned units, only the Picentian cavalry regiment, an auxiliary unit, resists their captors in any way, hurling weapons at Vocula's murderer when they meet him on the march.⁴¹⁸ This act of defiance, Tacitus remarks, "was the beginning of the expiation of their guilt moving forward" (*initium exsolvendae in posterum culpa*, 4.62.4). The legions, conversely, do nothing to resist imprisonment or restore their reputation (*nihil mutato itinere*, 4.62.4). The Picentian cavalry's courage makes the legions look all the more cowardly by contrast. Thus, Tacitus heaps further doubt on their status as Romans.

Also indirectly damaging to Rome's reputation is the peaceful cooperation achieved among the Germans at this time. Though greed has been a powerful force among Civilis and the Germans no less than it has been among the Romans, the Germans are able to rise above it. Whereas Antonius Primus had allowed—even stoked—his soldiers' greed and leveraged it into a victory over his fellow Romans, Civilis and his rivals among the German tribes negotiate a bloodless and mutually-agreed-upon peace (4.66.1).⁴¹⁹

THE END OF THE SIEGE AT VETERA

It is also at this time that Tacitus narrates the end of the siege at Vetera (4.56-60), another dark episode in the Flavians' failing struggle to establish a successful post-civil-war identity.

Julius Classicus endeavors to build upon the *sacramentum* won from Vocula's men. To that end, he targets for conversion the legionary camp at Vetera, the site of the long-term siege

⁴¹⁸ Cf. Ash (1998) 33, who also notes the distinct characterization of each group: "Some of these soldiers deserve our sympathy more than others, thus complicating our reaction to the group as a whole. Besides, Tacitus informs us that one segment, the *ala Picentina*, cannot bear the *gaudium insultantis volgi* ('glee of the insolent populace') and abandons the column. Thus it seems likely that we will find compassion for at least some of the soldiers at *Histories* 4.62.28"

⁴¹⁹ Wellesley (2009) 303n108: "This civilized vignette [4.63.1-66.1] of the Tenecteri and the people of Colonia Agrippinensium resolving their internal differences by speech rather than by resorting to warfare offers a pointed contrast to the conduct of the Romans during the recent sequence of civil wars."

which began at 4.21.⁴²⁰ He enlists “all the most corrupt men” (*corruptissimum quemque*, 4.59.3) from among the defectors at Novaesium to offer the men holed up near Vetera a pardon if they surrender, and to serve as an example of obedience to Gaul. Classicus’ new strategy works remarkably well. The besieged, to their credit, hold out to the brink of starvation (4.60.1); but, rather than accept death, “they befouled their remarkable honor with a disgraceful finale, by sending envoys to Civilis to beg for their lives” (*donec egregiam laudem fine turpi macularent, missis ad Civilem legatis vitam orantes*, 4.60.1). Civilis then sets as precondition for accepting their surrender that they “swear allegiance to the Gauls” (*in verba Galliarum iurarent*, 4.60.2). This demonstrates once again the value Civilis places on the *sacramentum*. He is trying not merely to win a war, but to legitimize Gallo-Germanic rule.

We have hitherto examined many points of intratextual contact between the Flavians and the German rebels—more precisely, between (1) their respective attitudes towards, and usage of, oaths, and (2) their responses to the bloodlust and greed of their armies. Such intratexts, I have argued in PART 1 of this chapter, present Civilis as a threatening replay—or, more precisely, expansion—of the civil wars of books 1-3. Civilis’ ability, for instance, to use oaths to manipulate events and amass political power (4.21) recalls Mucianus’ orchestration of the Flavian challenge (2.73-81). Furthermore, the motivations and tactics of the Batavians at Vetera evoke the motivations and tactics of Antonius Primus’ Flavians at Cremona. But while Civilis collapses distinctions between his own barbarian forces and the Romans that created him, he simultaneously reinforces his otherness via unfamiliar oath rituals, barbaric battle tactics, and proto-nationalist pan-Germanic rhetoric. As we saw in PART 2 of this chapter, Roman identity is

⁴²⁰ See p. 156-57 above.

seriously threatened when the Gauls enter the rebellion (4.54) and entice Roman legionaries to swear allegiance to a foreign power (4.59.2, 4.60.2). These treasonous oaths, the disgraceful passivity of the imprisoned legionaries (4.62), and the relative civility and harmony of the Germans (4.63-66) all combine to mark a low point for Rome's morale and self-definition in the extant *Histories*.

By this point in book 4, Tacitus has driven Rome's stock even lower than it was at the eruptions of violence in the City throughout book 3. In the remainder of the present chapter, we will examine Tacitus' apparent decision to inaugurate a new phase of the narrative in which Roman rituals and institutions under the Flavians begin a process of rehabilitation.

PART 3: Petilius Cerialis

As book 4 draws to a close, Tacitus continues to dwell on the motifs and settings that have recurred throughout the *Histories* up until this point: oath-scenes, sieges, greedy soldiers, and donatives. While there are certainly gestures toward stability and reconciliation, the abrupt breaking-off of the text near the beginning of book 5 renders impossible any verdict on how Tacitus ultimately resolves the crisis that began in book 1 when Galba refused to pay a donative for the oaths of allegiance he had received. Nevertheless, I will endeavor (a) to consider how the motifs of oaths and greed do (and do not) change upon the entrance of Petilius Cerialis into the narrative, and (b) to speculate briefly on the future role of oaths in post-war Rome.

When Petilius Cerialis arrives in Germany, Roman pride and identity are already ascendant. The Sequani, a Gallic tribe who had remained loyal to Rome, had turned back the army of the Gallic rebels. This victory, says Tacitus, checks the "war's momentum" (*belli impetus*, 4.67.2). At this time, infighting, complacency, and self-serving leadership all begin to

plague the rebellious Gallic communities (4.69). A major development on the Roman side soon follows. When a Treviran contingent, led by Julius Tutor, suffers a humiliating defeat at the hands of a loyal Flavian force, led by Civilis' nephew, Julius Briganticus, the legions at Augusta Trevirorum—who once preferred a dead Vitellius to Vespasian, willingly swore allegiance to the Gallic rebels, and have since been living as disgraced prisoners of war—“voluntarily take the oath of allegiance to Vespasian” (*legiones...se ipsae in verba Vespasiani adigunt*, 4.70.5). This reflexive usage of *adigo* means that the administrators of the oath are the same as the recipients; in other words, the legions have taken the oath in to their own hands.⁴²¹ Thus, for the first time, the formerly-Vitellian northern legions appear *willing* to accept Vespasian as their commander. The old rifts caused by the civil wars of 69, Tacitus suggests, are finally beginning to close.

Cerialis is the first important agent in the *Histories* to act on behalf of a Roman state not at war with itself. Tacitus refers to him, significantly, not as a Flavian general, but as a “Roman general” (*Romanum ducem*, 4.71.5). In a confident display of chauvinism, Cerialis dismisses *loyal* Gallic auxiliaries from his army, boasting that the “legions were enough for imperial rule: let the allies return to their peacetime duties, confident in the fact that a war, once Rome get a hold of it, was as good as over” (*sufficere imperio legiones: socii ad munia pacis redirent secure velut confecto bello, quod Romanae manus excepissent*, 4.71.2).⁴²² With this lean, ultra-Roman force, Cerialis soundly defeats the Treviri in a pitched battle at Rigodulum (4.71).⁴²³ Though a great victory for Cerialis and for Rome, Tacitus is less concerned with the battle itself than with complex shifting of values which follows. The next day, he enters neighboring Augusta

⁴²¹ The reflexive of *adigo* also occurs in an oath context when Civilis “compelled neither himself nor any of the Batavians to swear an oath to the Gauls, relying instead on German resources...” (*neque se neque quemquam Batavum in verba Galliarum adegit, fisis Germanorum opibus...*, 4.61.1). Cf. also *Germanicus...seque et proximos et Belgarum civitatis in verba eius adigit* (“Germanicus administered the oath to himself, to those nearby, and to the cities of the Belgae,” A. 1.34.1), with Goodyear (1972) 254.

⁴²² Translation adapted from Wellesley (2009) 231; italics added for emphasis.

⁴²³ For a discussion of this battle, see Wightman (1970) 45-46.

Trevirorum (4.72.1),⁴²⁴ where two acts of healing ensue—one on matters of greed, the other on matters of oaths. These episodes are discussed in the two following sections, respectively.

A REPLAYING OF CREMONA AVERTED

Though the Treviran army is broken, that tribe's capital, Augusta Trevirorum (Trier), stands in Cerialis' path. As they enter the city, Cerialis' legions are aware of the violent precedent set at Cremona (3.26-31), and some express willingness to repeat it. In fact, their argument in favor of Trier's destruction rests (ironically) on the relative *injustice* of Cremona's destruction:

hanc esse Classici, hanc Tutoris patriam; horum scelere clausas caesasque legiones. quid tantum Cremona meruisse? quam e gremio Italiae raptam, quia unius noctis moram victoribus attulerit. stare in confinio Germaniae integram sedem spoliis exercituum et <du>cum caedibus ovanem. redigeretur praeda in fiscum: ipsis sufficere ignes et rebellis coloniae ruinas, quibus tot castrorum excidia pensarentur. (4.72.1)

This is the homeland of Classicus and Tutor; their crimes are responsible for the encirclement and murder of the legions. What similar crime did Cremona commit to deserve its destruction? It was snatched from Italy's bosom because it delayed the victors for one night. On Germany's border stands Trier, an untouched abode which exults in the spoils of our armies and the slaughter of our generals. Let its plunder go to the public coffers! The conflagration and ruination of this rebellious colony is sufficient recompense for the destruction of so many Roman camps.

Vengeance and bloodlust motivate these soldiers just as strongly as it had motivated many armies during the civil wars of 69 CE. But the willingness to forgo their cut of the booty does mark a significant shift from the acquisitiveness, to one degree or another, of nearly all the Roman armies encountered in the *Histories* thus far. Specifically, such self-corrective rhetoric speaks to the legions' readiness to turn away from the calculus of the Vitellio-Flavian war, wherein it was held in Primus' ranks that "the booty of a sacked city belonged to the common

⁴²⁴ Chilver (1985) 77: Rigodulum has been "convincingly identified with Riöl, on the right bank of the Mosel about eight miles downstream from Trier."

soldiers” (3.19.2). The reemergence of the loaded verb *penso* (*pensarentur*; cf. *aviditate praedae pensabantur*, 3.26.3) at the end of the above passage drives home the allusion to, and departure from that earlier mindset. When Cerialis, as if sensing the softening of the soldiers, “restrain[s] their anger” (*pressit iras*, 4.72.2) lest “he be believed to have imbued [them] with license and savagery” (*licentia saevitiaque imbuere militem crederetur*, 4.72.2) as Primus had done (3.15.2), they obey. Tacitus then confirms that the soldiers are indeed changing their attitude in response to the shifting parameters of warfare: *posito civium bello ad externa modestiores* (“they were more moderate toward external adversaries now that their war against internal enemies had been set aside,” 4.72.2). This comment marks, in unceremonious fashion, the first time in the *Histories* when Tacitus indicates that civil war (*bellum civile*) may finally be ending. For, after Vitellius had been put to death at the end of book 3, thus officially ending the Vitellian regime, Tacitus was frank that civil war had not ceased in actual fact: *interfecto Vitellio bellum magis desierat quam pax coeperat. armati per urbem victores implacabili odio victos consecabantur* (“after Vitellius had been killed, war subsided more than peace began, armed victors [i.e., Flavians] pursued the vanquished throughout the city out of unappeasable anger,” 4.1).

Now that a true *bellum externum* is dawning at last, Cerialis seeks to reassert some traditional Roman views of the non-Roman Other. In his subsequent speech before an assembly of the defeated Treviri, Cerialis attempts to shift the well-earned reputation for greed away from the Romans and onto his and his audience’s mutual enemy, the Germans. Earlier Romans, Cerialis pitches, first entered Gaul “not because they were greedy” (*nulla cupidine*), but because the Gauls themselves invited them (4.73.2).⁴²⁵ In this spirit of reconciliation with Rome’s Gallic partners, Cerialis resorts to the reservoir of marauding barbarian stereotypes:

⁴²⁵ Master (2016) 55 points out that Cerialis’ claim of *nulla cupidine* is undercut later in the same speech, when “he concludes by acknowledging the value of Gaul’s natural resources” (4.74.3). Cf. Adler (2011) 129.

an vos cariores Civili Batavisque et Transrhenanis gentibus creditis, quam maioribus eorum patres avique vestri fuerint? eadem semper causa Germanis transcendendi in Gallias, libido atque avaritia et mutandae sedis amor, ut relictis paludibus et solitudinibus suis fecundissimum hoc solum vosque ipsos possiderent. (4.73.3)

Do you believe that you are dearer to Civilis and the Batavians and the men across the Rhine than your parents and grandparents were to their ancestors? The Germans always invade Gaul for the same reason: lust and greed and a passion for migration, that they should leave their swamps and wildernesses to take possession of this ground and of you!

The hypocrisy is palpable. It is true, as we have seen in this chapter, that Civilis and his allies were, and continue to be, motivated by *avaritia*.⁴²⁶ But so were the Romans until quite recently. Moreover, the recent civility and diplomacy of the German rebels (4.63-66) puts the lie to such blanket generalizations about Germanic acquisitiveness and barbarity. But Cerialis is not appealing to history or, for that matter, to observable fact; he is appealing to Romans' long-held beliefs about their own superiority. Cerialis is merely doing what Romans have often done throughout their history: defined themselves in terms antithetical to the barbarian Other.⁴²⁷

FATUM AND THE WHITEWASHING OF HISTORY

Before the battle at Rigodulum, Cerealis had sent word to the land of the Mediomatrici—where the late Vocula's army had taken refuge from the Treviri during the skirmishing between Julius Tutor and Julius Briganticus (4.70.5)⁴²⁸—that the traitors, who had “sworn an oath of allegiance to Gallic rule” (*iuravere qui aderant pro imperio Galliarum*, 4.59.2), were to join his army. So it was that, after the more time-sensitive matter of Trier's survival had resolved,

⁴²⁶ For German rebels' love of plunder even after the speech, cf. 4.76, 78.1; 5.17.

⁴²⁷ For a recent discussion of the views found in Tacitus' writings of various barbarian groups, including Germans, see Mellor (2011) 42-62, esp. 51-53. On Germany's role in Tacitus as a repository for vanishing Roman values, see O'Gorman (1993), esp. 114-15. On (proto-)racist Roman attitudes towards Germans, see Isaac (2004) 427-39.

⁴²⁸ Divodurum (Metz), the capital of the Mediomatrici, was also the sight of mass slaughter on Valens' march south (1.63), before he tamped down the violence (1.64-66).

convertit inde animos e Mediomatricis legionum miserabilis adspectus. [3] stabant conscientia flagitii maestae, fixis in terram oculis: nulla inter coeuntes exercitus consalutatio, neque solantibus hortantibusve responsa dabant, abditi per tentoria et lucem ipsam vitantes. nec proinde periculum aut metus quam pudor ac deducis obstupefecerat, attonitis etiam victoribus. qui vocem precesque adhibere non ausi lacrimis ac silentio veniam poscebant, donec Cerialis mulceret animos, fato acta dictitans, quae militum ducumque discordia vel fraude hostium evenissent. [4] primum illum stipendiorum et sacramenti diem haberent: priorum facinorum neque imperatorem neque se meminisse. tunc recepti in eadem castra, et edictum per manipulos, ne quis in certamine iurgiove seditionem aut cladem commilitioni obiectaret. (4.72.2-4)

Cerialis then turned his attention to the pitiful appearance of the legions arrived from the land of the Mediomatrici. [3] They were standing, eyes fixed on the ground, in sorrowful awareness of their disgrace. The converging armies [i.e., Cerialis' victorious force and Vocula's traitors] did not greet one another. [Vocula's old army] hid in their tents, avoiding the very light of day, unresponsive to either consolation or exhortation. It was not so much danger and fear as shame and dishonor which had left them dumbstruck. Even the victors were astonished. [Vocula's old army], not daring to put voice to their entreaties, begged pardon with their silent tears, until Cerialis put their minds at ease by repeatedly insisting that events—which had transpired because of the discord between soldiers and commanders or the deception of the enemy—were the result of fate. [4] He told them to consider today the first day of their term of service and oath of allegiance; that neither he nor they ought to dwell on past crimes. Then [Cerialis' and Vocula's legions] were admitted into the same camp, and an edict went out to all the companies prohibiting anyone, either out of rivalry or because of a quarrel, from accusing their fellow soldier of mischief or mutiny.

In an effort to move past recent discord and to create a new, unified loyalty to the sole emperor

Vespasian, Cerialis is attempting to rewrite history. There is tension between the stated

(*dictitans*) reason for recent events (*acta*)—"the result of fate" (*fato*)—and the reasons supplied

in the dependent clause: "[drama] which had transpired because of the discord between soldiers

and commanders or the deception of the enemy" (*quae militum ducumque discordia vel fraude*

hostium evenissent). While Cerialis tells his army what it needs to hear, he simultaneously reminds

his internal *and* external audience of the truth. The subjunctive *evenissent* reflects the fact that

the verb appears in a relative clause embedded in a subordinate clause;⁴²⁹ the mood does not, in other words, necessarily indicate that the narrator is distancing himself from the statement's veracity.

As we saw in PART 2, Tacitus expends considerable space to showing precisely how “the discord between soldiers and commanders or the deception of the enemy” precipitated the downfall of Vocula's legions. But Cerialis insists on the much simpler and more comforting explanation of “fate.” As Jason Davies has demonstrated, Tacitus often invokes *fatum* but does so primarily to explain and comment up the broad sweeps and cycles of history at Rome.⁴³⁰ It is human frailty, rather, which deserves much of the blame for Rome's long record of civil strife.⁴³¹ The historian even betrays outright contempt for those who would resort to *fatum* in order to explain misfortune on a smaller, more anecdotal scale. For instance, right after the despised Hordeonius Flaccus had surrendered his command to Vocula (4.25.4), the legions suffered a drought and food shortage, which “the ignorant” (*imperitos*) among them considered an omen (*prodigii loco*, 4.26.2). Tacitus, however, expresses a more studied view: “what in peacetime was called ‘happenstance’ or ‘nature’, was then called ‘fate’ and ‘the god's wrath’” (*quod in pace fors seu natura, tunc fatum et ira dei vocabatur*, 4.26.2).⁴³²

⁴²⁹ Tacitus and other later writers frequently use the subjective in *dum/donec* (“until”) clauses when earlier writers would have used the indicative; see Allen and Greenough § 556.

⁴³⁰ Davies (2004) 171-221, esp. 212-13: “Since the *fatum* of Rome was probably the greatest interpretative category that any Roman would be likely to refer to in practice, it is of such a magnitude that it must be treated with enormous respect...” For the most part, the only individuals whose lives Tacitus imbues with a sense of fate are the emperors (Vespasian especially), but only to a degree. On Vespasian's destiny, cf. also A.16.5.3 with Bartsch (1994) 6-7 and 30-31.

⁴³¹ Cf. esp. 2.38, with Griffin (2009) 169.

⁴³² Cf. the ignorant Pannonian soldiers' faulty interpretation of an eclipse in the *Annals*: *id miles rationis ignarus omen praesentium accepit, suis laboribus defectionem sideris adsimulans* (“the soldiers, ignorant of the reason, interpreted it as an omen of present circumstances, conflating the eclipse of the moon with their own toils,” A. 1.28.1). Educated Romans had understood the science behind eclipses since the Republic: cf. Lucr. 5.751, Cic. *Div.* 2.6.17, Liv. 44.37, with Furneaux (1884) 192.

Vocula, who seems to have articulated many of Tacitus' own views, spoke (mainly) truth to discord, but was killed for glibly dismissing the seriousness of recent *sacramentum-donativum* tensions. Cerialis takes another tactic: he downplays the significance of discord itself, and hopes that forgetfulness will give way to harmony. In that spirit, he bids the former Vitellians "to consider today the first day of their term of service and oath of allegiance" (*primum illum stipendiorum et sacramenti diem haberent*, 4.72.4). The differentiation of *sacramentum* from *stipendium* implies different shades of meaning. Based on our previous discussion, I submit that, whereas *stipendium* represents resumption of service in a Roman legion in a very literal sense, *sacramentum* in this formulation represents the symbolic renewal of unity, harmony, and loyalty. Cerialis is offering a fresh start on a personal *and* institutional level.

But are Cerialis' aspirations for future unity actually achieved by his attempt to force reconciliation via a revisionist version of contemporary history? The meager evidence available to us suggests not. This is not surprising: Cerialis is not, in Tacitus' estimation, Rome's long-awaited savior.⁴³³ Vitellius' old army continues to be a thorn in Cerialis' side in the ensuing engagement with the main forces of Civilis, Tutor, and Classicus. Cerialis returns to his encampment after a victorious engagement against the rebels:

...palantes captarum apud Novaesium Bonnamque legionum manipulos et rarum apud signa militem ac prope circumventas aquilas videt. Incensus ira "non Flaccum," inquit, "non Voculam deseritis: nulla hic proditio; neque aliud excusandum habeo, quam quod vos Gallici foederis oblitos redisse in memoriam Romani sacramenti temere credidi. ..." [78.1] vera erant, et a tribunis praefectisque eadem ingerebantur. (4.77.2-78.1)

He saw that the companies of the legions captured at Novaesium and Bonna were wandering aimlessly about, while only a few soldiers were gathered around the standards and the eagles were practically in the hands of the enemy. Exploding with

⁴³³ On the various failings of Cerialis generally, see Keitel (1993) 53, Master (2012) 89. In the final battle recorded between Cerialis and Civilis before the text breaks off (5.14-18), Ash (2009) 97 points out that Cerialis "manages to win only because of a Batavian deserter, who shows him how to outflank the Germans...hardly allow[ing] much room for patriotic fervor."

rage, Cerialis exclaimed: “It is not Hordeonius Flaccus nor Vocula that you are deserting. There is no question of treachery here. The only thing that I must apologize for is that I rashly believed that you had forgotten your alliance with Gaul and remembered your oath to Rome. ...” [78.1] His words were true, and the same taunts were driven home by the tribunes and prefects.

After being scolded, the men reform their ways and rejoin the ranks (4.78.1). But one must wonder how long this reformation will last, considering how easily Cerialis’ brokered unity was violated. Unfortunately, the answer to this question lies somewhere in the lost books of the *Histories*. Yet even if we choose to believe that Cerialis’ hope of the renewing effect of a *primus sacramenti dies* is eventually realized among Vocula’s legions, there is plenty reason to believe that the future of loyalty and the *sacramentum* is not very bright.

DOMITIAN AND THE NEW FACE OF *FIDES*

The final chapters of book 4 contain a precious glimpse of the young Domitian, the notorious Tacitean villain of the *Agricola* and no doubt a villainous character in much of the lost portion of the *Histories*. Still a teenager at this point, the future emperor is already exhibiting several early signs of his later historiographical persona: jealousy, suspicion, paranoia, and ambition:

unde creditur Domitianus occultis ad Cerialem nuntiis fidem eius temptavisse, an praesenti sibi exercitum imperiumque traditurus foret. qua cogitatione bellum adversus patrem agitaverit an opes viresque adversus fratrem, in incerto fuit. (4.86.1).

From there [Lyons], Domitian is believed to have sent secret messages to Cerialis to test his loyalty—that is, whether he, Cerialis, would hand over control of his army to him [Domitian] when they met. Upon reflection, it was unclear to Cerialis whether Domitian wanted to stir up war against his father or acquire resources and strength against his brother.

With this passage, Cerialis’ role in book 4 abruptly shifts from agent of order and enforcer of *fides* to subordinate and object of suspicion. Though the extant text breaks off shortly after this, it

is tempting to see in this shift an importation of the plagues of 69 CE—*seditiones*, crises of *fides*, flimsy and broken *sacramenta*—into the psyche of the peacetime Flavian court. It is a terrifying prospect that Domitian should even be in the position to demand *fides*. In 70 CE, he does not yet have that power, but through this passage Tacitus reminds his readers that he soon will. In spite of Domitian's youth and relatively weak position, Cerialis already feels compelled to tread carefully and to avoid potential conflict (*elusit*). Yet Domitian's true motives are shrouded in mystery, as Tacitus has overlaid the scene with hearsay (*creditur*), secrecy (*occultis*), and uncertainty (*in incerto fuit*). The loyalties and disloyalties of the coming phase of Roman political and military life, suggests Tacitus, will be even more fickle and difficult to navigate than the complexities of the civil wars—where at least the creation, affirmation and straining of trust and affection often found dramatic, public outlets in *sacramentum* acts—broken and re-forged. In the post-civil-war world, can Domitian secure Cerialis' loyalty by demanding a public oath of allegiance? No, probably not. Can Cerialis publicly forswear Domitian in favor, say, of Vespasian or Titus—or someone outside the Flavian family? No, certainly not.

Conclusion

Much is made (for good reason) about the threat Civilis poses to Roman identity and self-definition. Tacitus himself scarcely misses an opportunity to remind us. In the “First Phase” of the revolt (PART 1), while the Vitellio-Flavian war is still being waged, Civilis proves himself more than capable of mirroring successful Flavian tactics of military management—namely, the administration of oaths and the admittance of plunder. But that is *all* Civilis can do—*reflect* Flavian tactics back at the Flavians. Civilis' similarities to Mucianus and Primus are no doubt meant to send chills up the reader's spine. In real terms, however, his rebel army is made up of

non-citizen cohorts and Germans from across the Rhine; no actual *legions* show any inclination to join him. Despite the various crises of identity within the Roman civil wars, Roman identity vis-à-vis *actual* non-Romans by birth and self-identity is, at this point, safe.

All that begins to change when Cremona is destroyed and the “Second Phase” of the revolt is ushered in (PART 2). It is one of the great ironies of the plot of the *Histories* that Roman soldiers’ fundamental loyalty to the Roman enterprise suffers its most dire crisis *after* the death of Vitellius, and therefore technically after the end of *bellum civile*. It is true that, before the defection of Vocola’s legions to the Gallic conspiracy (*in externa verba iurarent*), the Roman world had suffered countless outrages at its own hands. But the perpetrators of those outrages, however misguided, always acted in the name of a Roman emperor—or a man trying to become one.

Why betray Rome now? What has changed? As I have argued in this study, Tacitus defines the civil wars of 69 as (a) the failure to properly reward soldiers for their pledges of loyalty and (b) the struggle to arrive at a new settlement between, on the one hand, the built-up financial expectations of the Julio-Claudian era coupled with the plundering impulse of civil warriors, and on the other hand, the leader’s need to legitimize authority and maintain stability through *sacramenta*. The Flavians were doing an excellent job maintaining that balance (albeit with some extremely questionable morality). But, when Hordeonius Flaccus insulted the soldiers’ sense of fairness regarding oaths and donatives, it was like it was 1 January 69 all over again. This time, after more than a year of horrific civil war, it is hardly surprising that the disaffected legions no longer found using the SPQR as an oath-recipient placeholder appealing (cf. 1.55.4). Indeed, in the absence of another Otho or Vitellius to absorb their dissatisfaction, the offended legionaries went with the Gauls. Civil war, suggests Tacitus, is the result of deeper

conflicts between soldiers and commanders. So, in the absence of a civil war, those conflicts will find outlet elsewhere.

The loss of the rest of the *Histories* robs us of knowing how well the Flavian dynasty managed to incorporate Vitellius' legions into their own system of legionary control—or, for that matter, what that system ultimately looked like in later books. But it seems unlikely that Cerialis' appeals to fate settled things for good. Tacitus certainly lays considerable blame for the lack of reconciliation at the feet of the Flavian brass of book 4 (i.e., Flaccus, Vocula, and Cerialis). Yet the deeper problem is rooted in unsettled questions of what the Principate is and ought to be: are the Flavians now synonymous with Rome, or merely the Capitol's current occupant? That is, can Vocula justly argue that, when it comes to purchasing loyalty with donatives, the imperial status of the donor supersedes his individual identity? Vespasian's northern forces certainly do not think so: whereas the Flavian command believes that the rivalries and allegiances of 69 CE can and ought to be dissolved, and that Flavian rule now equals Roman rule, Vocula's legions dramatize and embody the lingering strife of civil war

Final Conclusions

The initial failure of the oath-gift relationship rests on Galba's shoulders. Not even Tacitus can bring himself to condemn the praetorians of January 69 for expecting a donative: to want what has been freely offered, no matter how corrupt in motivation or vast in size, is not *greed* per se—materialism perhaps, but not greed. For greed entails immoderation, and the purchasing of oaths in recent decades was, however unsavory, a mutually agreed-upon transaction. To borrow from the language of contemporary political discourse, the civil warrior of early 69 might legitimately say: “I didn’t leave the Roman party, the Roman party left me.” In this context, Galba’s expectation of receiving a “free” oath was the *real* immoderation. This schism between an emperor’s mindset and his soldiers’ expectations afforded Tacitus the perfect starting point for a work (or at least a set of several books) dedicated not only to the transition from one dynasty to another, but from one imperial settlement to another.

Galba’s big mistake transcends the man himself. For the true dilemma of the *Histories* resides in the abstract, on the level of institutional rather than inter-factional conflict: when the *sacramentum-donativum* contract is broken, how is the total dissolution of the *principes*’ source of authority—i.e., the willing participation of the legions, represented by their oaths of loyalty, in the making and maintenance of empire—averted? Otho and Vitellius (and their advisers), the challengers who initially capitalize on Galba’s mistake, constitute merely the immediate political and military fallout. Their emperorships, in other words, are more reactive than proactive. Only the carefully planned Flavian challenge makes a concerted attempt to remake Rome’s institutions: Vespasian (and Mucianus more so) understand and respect *sacramenta* as the “right” way of doing things. The *donativum* is just the right size. An element of the acclamation scene is

even genuinely spontaneous. But does any of that *matter*? Vespasian's geographical isolation certainly does him no favors: his *exercitus melior* has no effect on the actual theater of war.

That warrior role falls to the *raptor largitor* Antonius Primus and his greedy legions, whose mutually agreed-upon “contract” between violent plunder and narrowly avoided mutiny at every turn wins the day. Oaths are conspicuously absent from Primus' campaign, which makes sense: the former are about forging lasting bonds; the latter is improvisational, purely goal-oriented. It is certainly no coincidence that Caecina's failure to extend the oath to his legion occurs on the eve of the Second Battle of Cremona. Nor is it unclear what Tacitus thinks about attempting to rebuild military society without its essential ritual: Tacitus' alignment of Primus' “scales of war” with Hannibal and the Senones Gauls is disconcerting in the extreme, for it situates the incipient dynasty on non-Roman—or rather *anti*-Roman—foundations.

The Batavian Revolt (book 4) forces the Flavians to reckon with the nature of their own successes, as Civilis and his fellow rebels in turn successfully employ similar oath and plunder tactics for their own gain. If the Vitellians often function as foils for the Flavians, then the Batavians function, uncomfortably, as their double. Worse still, the rebels often exhibit a *superior* understanding of the Romans' own customs, such that several Flavian generals have a difficult time winning and retaining the loyalty of the former Vitellians. The moral nadir of the extant work occurs when Vocula's legions at Novaesium swear *in externa verba*. This phrase retrojects a degree of normalcy onto the forgoing civil-war oaths: at least all Four Emperors *identified* as Roman. As book 4 draws to a close, it is unclear whether the Flavians will ever succeed in convincing Vitellius' old legions (and the reader) that (a) Vespasian is synonymous with the state, and that (b) the problems of 69-70 can simply be chalked up to fate, but the forecast looks bleak.

When Tacitus decided to frame the year 69 in terms of oaths, he vested each subsequent oath with the implicit question: “will this be the one that restores order and respect for Rome’s military institutions?” In other words, every oath—especially the broken ones—constitutes a recollection, reenactment, and perpetuation of the events 1 January 69. Some oaths seem more promising than others in the moment (e.g., Vespasian’s acclamation), but all fall short of meaningful, lasting reconciliation. The gloominess of this narrative strategy can hardly be overstated. To use a stage metaphor, it is as if Tacitus has his main character (i.e., a functioning Roman political system) get stabbed to death in the first scene, and then spends the rest of the play occasionally trotting out character after character to grab the hilt and twist the blade.

The accidents of manuscript transmission can lead to myopia. We must be vigilant against extrapolating the darkness of *Histories* 1-4 into the rest of work, of which we have little idea of the content.⁴³⁴ Yet when it comes to the sort of deeper institutional, rather than political, crisis I have argued for in this study, there is certainly no guarantee that Roman *reverentia sacramenti* ever fully healed in *Histories* 5-12. The mere fact of competent, well-founded Vespasianic rule, as Tacitus clearly demonstrates in the surviving books, is not in itself sufficient to protect against the destruction of entire cities (i.e., Cremona, Rome). The Flavians’ *best* moments, the initial acclamation in Judaea and subsequent oaths in Syria and throughout the East, cannot even be attributed to Vespasian; Mucianus, an ambitious and Machiavellian (Sejanan?) man, was the *sine qua non* of those events. In fact, in *Histories* 1-4, the health of the *sacramentum* lives and dies with the varying competencies and mentalities of Vespasian’s agents—from Mucianus, to Antonius Primus, to Hordeonius Flaccus, to Dillius Vocula, to

⁴³⁴ If *Histories* 4-5 had been lost to us, who could have predicted them?

Petilius Cerialis. Given what we know about Tacitus' fondness for overly ambitious subordinates of emperors, that is a scary thought.

Bibliography

- Adler, E. 2011. *Valorizing the Barbarians: Enemy Speeches in Roman Historiography*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Alföldy, G. 1968. *Die Hilfstruppen der Römischen Provinz Germania Inferior*. vol. 6. Cologne: Böhlau.
- Alston, R. 1994. "Roman Military pay from Caesar to Diocletian." *JRS* 84: 113-23.
- Andresen, G. 1916. "Tacitus und Livius III." *Phil. Woch.* 32: 758-66.
- Ash, R. 1997. "Severed Heads: Individual Portraits and Irrational Forces in Plutarch's Galba and Otho." In J. Mossman, ed., *Plutarch and his Intellectual World*, 189-214. London: Classical Press of Wales.
- . 1998. "Waving the White Flag: Surrender Scenes at Livy 9.5-6 and Tacitus, *Histories* 3.31 and 4.62." *Greece & Rome* 45: 27-44.
- . 1999. *Ordering Anarchy. Armies and Leaders in Tacitus' Histories*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- . ed. 2007. *Tacitus, Histories Book II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2007b. "The Wonderful World of Mucianus." In E. Bispham, G. Rowe, and E. Matthews, eds., *Festschrift for Barbara Levick (BICS)*. 1-17. London: Institute for Classical Studies.
- . 2009. "Fission and Fusion: Shifting Roman Identities in the *Histories*." In A. J. Woodman, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, 85-99. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2010a. "Rhoiolani Blues (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.79): Virgil's Scythian Ethnography Revisited." In J. F. Miller and A. J. Woodman, eds., *Latin Historiography and Poetry in the Early Empire: Generic Interpretations*, 141-54. Leiden: Brill.
- . 2010b. "*Tarda Moles Civilis Belli*: The Weight of the Past in Tacitus' *Histories*." In B. W. Breed, C. Damon, and A. Rossi, eds., *Citizens of Discord: Rome and Its Civil Wars*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Aubrion, E. 1985. *Rhétorique et histoire chez Tacite*. Metz: University of Metz.
- Austin, R. G., ed. 1964. *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Secundus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Barzanò, A. 1980. "Il dies imperii di Vespasiano." *Iura* 31: 148-50.

- Bassols de Climent, M., ed. 1951. *Cornelio Tácito Historias, Libro Tercero*. Madrid and Barcelona: La Escuela de Filología de Barcelona.
- Baxter, R. T. S. 1971. "Virgil's Influence on Tacitus in Book 3 of the Histories." *CP* 66: 93-107.
- . 1972. "Virgil's Influence on Tacitus in Books 1 and 2 of the *Annals*." *CP* 67: 246-69.
- Beard, M., North, J., and Price, S. 1998. *Religions of Rome Volume 1: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2003. "The Triumph of Flavius Josephus." In A. J. Boyle and W. J. Dominik, eds., *Flavian Rome*, 543-58. Leiden: Brill.
- Beare, R. 1979. "The Imperial Oath under Julius Caesar." *Latomus* 38: 469-73.
- Benario, H. W. 1988. "Tacitus, Trier and the Treviri." *CJ* 233-39.
- Bessone, L. 1972. *La rivolta Batavica e la crisi de 69 d.c.* Turin: Accademia delle Scienze di Torino.
- Brice, L. L. 2003. *Holding a Wolf by the Ears: Mutiny and Unrest in the Roman Military, 44 B.C.-A.D. 68*. Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
- Briessmann, A. 1955. *Tacitus und das Flavische Geschichtsbild*. Hermes Einzelschriften 10. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner.
- Briscoe, J. 1971. "The Imperial Oath of Allegiance." *JRS* 21: 260-63. Review of Herrmann, P. 1968. *Der römische Kaisereid: Untersuchungen zu seiner Herkunft und Entwicklung*. Hypomnemata 20. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.
- Brunt, P. A. 1950. "Pay and Superannuation in the Roman Army." *PBSR* 18: 50-71.
- . 1960. "Tacitus on the Batavian Revolt." *Latomus* 19: 494-517.
- . 1962. "The Army and the Land in the Roman Revolution." *JRS* 52: 69-86.
- . 1974. "C. Fabricius Tuscus and an Augustan *dilectus*." *ZPE* 13: 161-85.
- Burgers, P. 2001. "Coinage and State Expenditure: The Reign of Claudius AD 41-54." *Historia* 50: 96-114.
- Campbell, J. B. 1984. *The Emperor and the Roman Army: 31 BC – AD 235*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Cary, E., ed. 1925. *Dio's Roman History VIII*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Chilver, G. E. F. 1956. *JRS* 46: 203-5. Review of A. Briessmann, 1955, *Tacitus und das Flavische Geschichtsbild*, *Hermes Einzelschriften* 10. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner.
- . 1957. "The Army in Roman Politics, A.D. 68-70." *JRS* 47: 29-35.
- . ed. 1979. *A Historical Commentary on Tacitus' Histories I and II*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Chilver, G. E. F. and Townend, G. B., eds. 1985. *A Historical Commentary on Tacitus' Histories IV and V*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Chrissanthos, S. 1999. *Seditio: Mutiny in the Roman Army 90-40 B.C.* PhD diss.: University of Southern California.
- . 2001. "Caesar and the Mutiny of 47 B.C." *JRS* 91: 63-75.
- Coffee, N. 2009. *The Commerce of War: Exchange and Social Order in Latin Epic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Corbaud, E. 1918. *Les procédés d'art de Tacite dans les Histoires*. Paris: Librairie Hachette.
- Damon, C., ed. 2003. *Tacitus, Histories Book I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2006. "Potior utroque Vespasianus: Vespasian and his Predecessors in Tacitus' Histories." *Arethusa* 39: 245-79.
- Davies, J. P. 2004. *Rome's Religious History: Livy, Tacitus and Ammianus on their Gods*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dölger, F. J. 1930. "Sacramentum Militiae." In *Antike und Christentum*. vol. 2. Münster: Aschendorff.
- Duff, J. D., trans. 1934. *Silius Italicus Punica Books I-VIII*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Duncan-Jones, R. 1994. *The Economy of the Roman Empire: Quantitative Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dyck, A. R. 1996. *A Commentary on Cicero, De Officiis*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Eckstein, A. M. 1987. *Senate and General: Individual Decision Making and Roman Foreign Relations, 264-194*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Edwards, R. 2012. "Devotio, Disease, and Remedia in the Histories." In V. E. Pagán, ed., *A Companion to Tacitus*, 238-59. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Fantham, E. 1985. "Caesar and the Mutiny: Lucan's Reshaping of the Historical Tradition in *De Bello Civili* 5.237-373." *CP* 80: 119-131.
- Flaig, E. 1992. *Den Kaiser herausfordern: Die Usurpation im Römischen Reich*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.
- Furneaux, H., ed. 1896. *The Annals of Tacitus*. Vol 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Feeney, D. 1998. *Literature and Religion at Rome: Cultures, Contexts, and Beliefs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2007. *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginning of History*. Sather Classical Lectures 65. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ferrill, A. 1965. "Otho, Vitellius, and the Propaganda of Vespasian." *CJ* 60: 267-69.
- Foster, B. O., trans. 1924. *Livy: History of Rome, Volume III, Books 5-7*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- . trans. 1929. *Livy: History of Rome, Volume V, Books 21-22*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Frayn, J. M. 1993. *Markets and Fairs in Roman Italy: Their Social and Economic Importance from the Second Century BC to the Third Century AD*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Freyburger, G. 1986. *Fides: Étude sémantique et religieuse depuis les origines jusqu'à l'époque augustéenne*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Ginsburg, J. 1981. *Tradition and Theme in the Annals of Tacitus*. Salem, NH: Arno Press.
- Goodyear, F. R. D., ed. 1972. *The Annals of Tacitus Books 1-6: Annals 1.1-54*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1981. *The Annals of Tacitus Books 1-6: Annals 1.55-81 and Annals 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gordon, R. L. 1972. "Mithraism and Roman Society." *Religion* 2: 92-121.
- Gowing, A. M. 2009. "From the Annalists to the *Annales*: Latin Historiography before Tacitus." In A. J. Woodman, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, 17-30. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grant, M. 1974. *The Army of the Caesars*. New York: Scribner.

- Griffin, M. T. 1984. *Nero: The End of a Dynasty*. London: Batsford.
- . 2000. "The Flavians." In A. K. Bowman, P. Garnsey, D. Rathbone, eds., *Cambridge Ancient History Volume 11*, 1-83. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2009. "Tacitus as a Historian." In A. J. Woodman, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, 168-83. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hainsworth, J. B. 1964. "The Starting Point of Tacitus' *Historiae*: Fear or Favour by Omission?" *Greece & Rome* 11: 128-36.
- Harmand, J. 1967. *L'Armée et le soldat à Rome, de 107 à 50 avant notre ère*. Paris: A. J. Picard et Cie.
- . 2003. *The History of Make-Believe*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- . 2012. "Tacitus' History and Mine." In V. E. Pagán, ed., *A Companion to Tacitus*, 282-304. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Haynes, I. 2013. *Blood of the Provinces: The Roman Auxilia and the Making of Provincial Society from Augustus to Severans*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Helgeland, J. 1978. "Roman Army Religion." *ANRW* II 16.2: 1470-1505.
- Hellegouarc'h, J. 1972. *Le vocabulaire Latin des relations et des partis politique sous la republique*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Herrmann, P. 1968. *Der römische Kaisereid: Untersuchungen zu seiner Herkunft und Entwicklung*. Hypomnemata 20. Göttingen: Vanderhoeck and Ruprecht.
- Heubner, H., ed. 1963. *P. Cornelius Tacitus die Historien, Band I, Erstes Buch*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag.
- . ed. 1968. *P. Cornelius Tacitus die Historien, Band II, Zweites Buch*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag.
- . ed. 1972. *P. Cornelius Tacitus die Historien, Band III, Drittes Buch*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag.
- . ed. 1976. *P. Cornelius Tacitus die Historien, Band IV, Viertes Buch*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag.
- Hickson, F. V. 1993. *Roman Prayer Language: Livy and the Aeneid of Vergil*. Stuttgart: Teubner.

- Hirschfeld, O. 1890. "Zur annalistischen Anlage des Taciteischen Geschichtswerkes." *Hermes* 25: 363.
- Hug, A. 1920. "Salutatio." *RE* 1A2: 2060-72.
- Hurley, D. W. 2001. *Suetonius: Divus Claudius*. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Isaac, B. 2004. *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Joseph, T. 2012. "Tacitus and Epic." In V. E. Pagán, ed., *A Companion to Tacitus*, 369-85. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- . 2012. *Tacitus the Epic Successor: Virgil, Lucan, and the Narrative of Civil War in the Histories*. Leiden: Brill.
- Kajanto, I. 1970. "Tacitus' Attitude to War and the Soldier." *Latomus* 29: 699-718.
- . 1981. "Fortuna." *ANRW* II 17.1: 502-88.
- Kaser, M. 1971. *Das römisches Privatrecht*. Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 3.3. Munich: C. H. Beck.
- Keddie, J. N. 1975. "Italicus and Claudius: Tacitus, *Annales* xi 16-17." *Antichthon* 9: 52-60.
- Keitel, E. 1984. "Principate and Civil War in the *Annals* of Tacitus." *AJP* 105: 306-25.
- . 1987. "Otho's Exhortations in Tacitus' *Histories*." *Greece & Rome* 34: 73-82.
- . 1991. "The Structure and Function of Speeches in Tacitus' *Histories* I-III." *ANRW* II 33.4: 2772-94.
- . 1992a. "The function of the Livian reminiscences at Tacitus *Histories* 4.58.6 and 62." *CJ* 87: 327-37.
- . 1992b. "*Foedum Spectaculum* and Related Motifs in *Histories* 2-3." *RhM* 135: 342-51.
- . 1993. "Speech and Narrative in *Histories* 4." In T. J. Luce and A. J. Woodman, eds., *Tacitus and the Tacitean Tradition*, 39-58. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- . 2006. "*Sententia* and Structure in Tacitus' *Histories* 1.12-49." *Arethusa* 39: 219-44.
- . 2008. "The Virgilian Reminiscences at Tacitus *Histories* 3.84.4." *CQ* 58: 705-708.

- Koestermann, E., ed. 1965. *Cornelius Tacitus Annalen Band II Buch 4-6*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag
- Kragelund, P. 2000. "Nero's *Luxuria*: in Tacitus and in the *Octavia*." *CQ* 50: 494-515.
- Kraus, C. S. and Woodman, A. J. 1997. *Latin Historians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Le Bohec, Y. 2006. *Latomus* 65: 1035-38. Review of J. Stäcker. 2003. *Princeps und miles: Studien zum Bindungs- und Nahverhältnis von Kaiser und Soldat im 1. und 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* Hildesheim: Olms.
- London, E. 1997. *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Levene, D. S. 1993. *Religion in Livy*. Leiden: Brill.
- . 2000. "Sallust's *Catiline* and Cato the Censor." *CQ* 50: 170-91.
- . 2009a. "Speeches in the *Histories*." In. A. J. Woodman, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, 212-24. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2009b. "Warfare in the *Annals*." In. A. J. Woodman, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, 225-40. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2010a. *Livy on the Hannibalic War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2010b. "Sallust's 'Catiline' and Cato the Censor." *CQ* 170-91.
- Levick, B. 1982. "Morals, Politics, and the Fall of the Roman Republic." *Greece & Rome* 29: 53-62.
- . 1990. *Claudius*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- . 1999. *Vespasian*. London: Routledge.
- Linderski, J. 1984. "Rome, Aphrodisias and the *Res Gestae*: The *Genera Militiae* and the Status of Octavian." *JRS* 74: 74-80.
- Lintott, A. W. 1972. "Imperial Expansion and Moral Decline in the Roman Republic." *Historia* 21: 626-38.
- Luce, T. J. 1989. "Ancient Views on the Causes of Bias in Historical Writing." *CP* 84: 16-31.
- Manolaraki, E. 2003. "*Seditio*: Military Disintegration in Tacitus' *Histories*." Ph.D. diss., Cornell University.

- . 2005. "A Picture Worth a Thousand Words: Revisiting Bedriacum (Tacitus *Histories* 2.70)." *CP* 100: 243-67.
- Manolaraki, E. and Augoustakis, A. 2012. "Silius Italicus and Tacitus on the Tragic Hero: The Case of Germanicus." In V. E. Pagán, ed., *A Companion to Tacitus*, 386-402. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Manuwald, G. 2009. "History in Pictures: Commemorative Ecphrases in Silius Italicus' *Punica*." *Phoenix* 63: 38-59.
- Marincola, J. 1997. *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1999. "Tacitus' Prefaces and the Decline of Imperial Historiography." *Latomus* 58: 391-404.
- . 2003. "Beyond Pity and Fear: The Emotions of History." *AncSoc* 33: 285-315.
- . 2005. "Looking to the End: Structure and Meaning in Greco-Roman Historiography." *Proceedings of the Langford Latin Seminar* 12: 285-320.
- Martin, R. H. 1955. "Tacitus and the Death of Augustus." *CQ* 5: 123-28.
- . 1981. *Tacitus*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Martin, R. H. and Woodman, A. J., eds. 1989. *Tacitus Annals Book IV*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Master, J. 2012. "The *Histories*." In V. E. Pagán, ed., *A Companion to Tacitus*, 84-100. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- . 2016. *Provincial Soldiers and Imperial Instability in the Histories of Tacitus*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- McCrum, M and Woodhead, A. G., eds. 1961. *Select Documents of the Principates of the Flavian Emperors Including the Year of Revolution A.D. 68-96*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCulloch Jr., H. Y. 1984. *Narrative Cause in the Annals of Tacitus*. Königstein: Anton Hain.
- Meillet, A. 1919. "Notes et discussion." *Bulletin de la Société de linguistique de Paris* 21: 126-27.
- Mellor, R. 2011. *Tacitus' Annals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Merkel, E. 1966. "Der Bataveraufstand bei Tacitus." Ph.D. diss., Ruprecht Karl University of

Heidelberg.

- Messer, W. S. 1920. "Mutiny in the Roman Army. The Republic." *CP* 15: 158-75.
- Millar, F. 1977. *The Emperor in the Roman World*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Miller, N. P. 1997. "Tacitus' Narrative Technique." *Greece & Rome* 24: 13-22.
- . 1977. *The Emperor in the Roman World: 31 BC – AD 337*. London: Duckworth.
- Mohrmann, C. 1958. *Études sur le latin des chrétiens*. Rome.
- Mommsen, T. 1871-1888. *Römisches Staatsrecht*. Leipzig: S. Hirzel.
- Morgan, M. G. 1992. "The Smell of Victory: Vitellius at Bedriacum (Tac. *Hist.* 2.70)." *CP* 87: 14-29.
- . 1993a. "Commissura in Tacitus, *Histories* 1." *CQ* 43: 274-91.
- . 1993b. "Two Omens in Tacitus' *Histories* (2.50.2 and 1.62.2-3)." *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 136: 321-29.
- . 1994a. "Rogues March: Caecina and Valens in Tacitus, *Histories* 1.61-70." *MH* 51: 103-25.
- . 1994b. "Vespasian's Fears of Assassination" (Tacitus *Histories* 2-74-75)." *Philologus* 138: 118-28.
- . 2006. *69 A.D.: The Year of Four Emperors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Münzer, F. 1899. "Die Quelle des Tacitus für die Germanenkriege." In *Bonner Jahrbücher: Jahrbücher des Vereins von Altertumsfreunden im Rheinlande*, vol. 104, 67-111. Bonn: A. Marcus.
- Murison, C. L. 1991. "The Historical Value of Tacitus' *Histories*." *ANRW* II 33.3: 1686-713.
- . 1993. *Galba Otho and Vitellius: Careers and Controversies*. Zürich: Olms.
- Newbold, R. F. 1976. "The vulgus in Tacitus." *RhM* 119: 85-92.
- Nicolas, E. P. 1979. *De Néron à Vespasien*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Nicolet, C. 1980. *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome*. P. S. Falla, trans. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Nicols, J. 1978. *Vespasian and the Partes Flavianae*. Historia Einzelschriften 28. Wiesbaden:

- F. Steiner.
- Oakley, S. P. 1997. *A Commentary on Livy Books VI-X*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ogilvie, R. M., ed. 1965. *A Commentary on Livy Books 1-5*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- O’Gorman, E. 1993. “No Place Like Rome: Identity and Difference in the *Germania* of Tacitus.” *Ramus* 22: 135-54.
- . 1995. “Shifting Ground: Lucan, Tacitus and the Landscape of Civil War.” *Hermathena* 158: 117-31.
- . 2000. *Irony and Misreading in the Annals of Tacitus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Osgood, J. 2011. *Claudius Caesar: Image and Power in the Early Roman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pagán, V. E. 1999. “Beyond Teutoburg: Transgression and Transformation in Tacitus *Annales* 1.61-62.” *CP* 94: 302-20.
- . 2004. *Conspiracy Narratives in Roman History*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- . 2006. “Shadows and Assassinations: Forms of Time in Tacitus and Appian.” *Arethusa* 39: 193-218.
- . ed. 2012. *A Companion to Tacitus*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Paton, W. R., trans. 2011. *Polybius, The Histories, Books 5-8*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Paul, G. M. 1982. “*Urbs Capta*: Sketch of an Ancient Literary Motif.” *Phoenix* 36: 144-55.
- Perrin, B., trans. 1924. *Plutarch’s Lives XI*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- von Petrikovits, J. 1983. “*Sacramentum*.” In B. Hartley and J. Wachter, eds., *Rome and her Northern Provinces: Papers Presented to Sheppard Frere in Honour of his Retirement from the Chair of the Archaeology of the Roman Empire, University of Oxford, 1983*, 178-201. Gloucester: A. Sutton.
- Pomeroy, A. J. 1991. *The Appropriate Comment*. Studien zur klassischen Philologie 58. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- . ed. 2012. “Tacitus and Roman Historiography.” In V. E. Pagán, ed., *A Companion to Tacitus*, 141-61. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

- Potter, D. S. 2012. "Tacitus' Sources." In V. E. Pagán, ed., *A Companion to Tacitus*, 125-40. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Powell, C. A. 1972. "Deum ira, hominum rabies." *Latomus* 31: 833-48.
- von Premerstein, A. 1937. *Vom Werden und Wesen des Prinzipats*. Munich: Beck.
- Radice, B., trans. 1969. *Pliny: Letters, Books VIII-X, Panegyricus*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ramsey, J. T., ed. 2007. *Sallust's Bellum Catilinae Second Edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . ed. and trans. 2015. *Sallust, Fragments of the Histories, Letters to Caesar*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Roche, P. 2008. "The Public Imagery of the Emperor Otho." *Historia* 57: 108-23.
- Rolfe, J. C., trans. 1914. *Suetonius II*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Roller, M. *Constructing Autocracy: Aristocrats and Emperors in Julio-Claudian Rome*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Rüpke, J. 1990. *Domi militiae: Die religiöse Konstruktion des Krieges in Rom*. Stuttgart: F. Steiner.
- Ryberg, I. S. 1942. "Tacitus' Art of Innuendo." *TAPhA* 73: 383-404.
- Sailor, D. 2008. *Writing and Empire in Tacitus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Samuels, R. 2014. "fides and foedus." In R. F. Thomas and J. M. Ziolkowski, eds., *The Virgil Encyclopedia Volume II*, 481-82. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Scott, R. T. 1968. *Religion and Philosophy in the Histories of Tacitus*. Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome 22. American Academy in Rome.
- Seeck, O. 1901. *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt*. vol 1. Berlin: Siemenroth and Troschel.
- Sharrock, A. 2000. "Intratextuality: Texts, Parts, and (W)holes in Theory." In A. Sharrock and H. Morales, eds., *Intratextuality: Greek and Roman Textual Relations*, 1-39. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shatzman, I. 1972. "The Roman General's Authority over Booty." *Historia* 21: 177-205.
- Sherk, R. K., ed. and trans. 1988. *The Roman Empire: Augustus to Hadrian*. Cambridge:

- Cambridge University Press.
- Sherwin-White, A. N., ed. 1966. *The Letters of Pliny: A Historical and Social Commentary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Shotter, D. C. A. 1991. "Tacitus' View of Emperors and the Principate." *ANRW* II 33.5: 3263-331.
- . 1997. "Tacitus and Antonius Primus." *LCM* 2: 23-27.
- . ed. 1993. *Suetonius: Lives of Galba, Otho and Vitellius*. Warminster: Aris and Phillips.
- Smallwood, E. M. 1967. *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, R. E. 1958. *Service in the Post-Marian Roman Army*. New York: Manchester University Press.
- Speidel, M. P. 1973. "The Pay of the *auxilia*." *JRS* 63: 141-47.
- Stäcker, J. 2003. *Princeps und miles: Studien zum Bindungs- und Nahverhältnis von Kaiser und Soldat im 1. und 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* Hildesheim: Olms.
- Stocks, C. 2014. *The Roman Hannibal*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Sullivan, D. 1976. "Innuendo and the 'Weighted Alternative' in Tacitus." *CJ* 71: 312-26.
- Sumi, G. S. 2005. *Ceremony and Power: Performing Politics in Rome between Republic and Empire*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Syme, R. 1958. *Tacitus*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thackeray, H. St. J. 1997. *Josephus: The Jewish War: Books III-IV*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Timpe, D. 1995. "Tacitus und der Bataveraufstand." In W. Schmitz, R. Schmitt, and A. Winterling, eds., *Gegenwärtige Antike – Antike Gegenwart*, 151-87. Munich: De Gruyter.
- Townend, G. 1961. "Some Flavian Connections." *JRS* 51: 54-62.
- Urban, R. 1985. *Der "Bataveraufstand" und die Erhebung des Julius Classicus*. Trierer historische Forschungen 8. Trier: Trierer historische Forschungen.
- Vessey, D. 1974. "Silius Italicus on the Fall of Saguntum." *CP* 69: 28-36.

- Veyne, P. 1990. *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism*. trans. B. Pearce. London: Penguin.
- Walker, B. 1952. *The Annals of Tacitus: A Study in the Writing of History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Walser, G. 1951. *Rom, das Reich und die fremden Völker in der Geschichtsschreibung der frühen Kaiserzeit*. Baden-Baden: Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft.
- Walsh, P. G., trans. 2000. *Cicero, On Obligations (De Officiis)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . trans. 2006. *Pliny the Younger Complete Letters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Watson, G. R. 1969. *The Roman Soldier*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Weber, W. 1922. "...nec nostri saeculi est." *Festgabe für K. Müller*. Tübingen.
- Wellesley, K. 1957. "Moonshine in Tacitus." *RhM* 100: 244-52.
- . ed. 1972. *Cornelius Tacitus, The Histories Book III*. Adelaide, Australia: Sydney University Press.
- . trans. 2009. *Tacitus, The Histories*. London and New York: Penguin.
- West, D. and Woodman, A. J., eds. 1979. *Creative Imitation and Latin Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- White, H. 1973/2014. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in 19th-Century Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Whitehead, D. 1979. "Tacitus and the Loaded Alternative." *Latomus* 38: 474-95.
- Whitton, C. 2012. "'Let us tread our path together': Tacitus and the Younger Pliny." In V. E. Pagán, ed., *A Companion to Tacitus*, 345-68. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Wiedemann, T. 1996. "From Nero to Vespasian." In *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 10, *The Augustan Empire, 43 B.C.-A.D. 69*, A. K. Bowman, E. Champlin, and A. Lintott, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wightman, E. M. 1970. *Roman Trier and the Treviri*. London: Hart Davis.
- Willems, W. J. H. 1984. "Romans and Batavians: A Regional Study in the Dutch East River Area II." *Berichten van de Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek* 34: 39-331.

- Williams, C. 2010. *Roman Homosexuality*. Second Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Williams, M. F. 1997. "Four Mutinies: Tacitus *Annals* 1.16-30; 1.31-49 and Ammianus Marcellinus *Res Gestae* 20.4.9-20.5.7; 24.3.1-8." *Phoenix* 51: 44-74.
- Wiseman, T. P. 1979. *Clio's Cosmetics: Three Studies in Greco-Roman Literature*. Exeter: Bristol Phoenix Press.
- Woodman, A. J. 1979. "Self-Imitation and the Substance of History." In D. West and A. J. Woodman, eds., *Creative Imitation and Latin Literature*, 143-55. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1988. *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*. London: Croom Helm.
- . 1997. "Tacitus." In C. S. Kraus and A. J. Woodman, eds., *Latin Historians*, pp. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1998. *Tacitus Reviewed*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . trans. 2004. *Tacitus: The Annals*. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett.
- . 2006. "Mutiny and Madness: Tacitus *Annals* 1.16-49." *Arethusa* 39: 303-29.
- . ed. 2009. *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2010. "Community Health: Metaphors in Latin Historiography." *Papers of the Langford Latin Seminar* 14: 43-61.
- . 2012. *From Poetry to History: Selected Papers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ziolkowski, A. 1993. "urbs direpta, or How the Romans Sacked Cities." In J. Rich and G. Shipley, eds., *War and Society in the Roman World*, 44-54. London: Routledge.